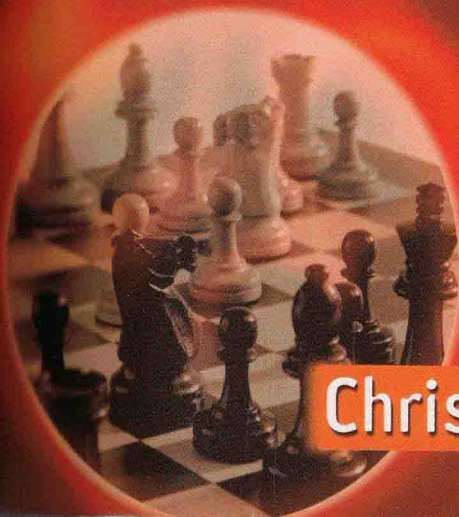


WINNING WITH THE

SICILIAN DRAGON 2



A Complete Repertoire Against
1 e4 For The Attacking Player



Chris Ward



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Best regards!!
Saludos!

Caissa Lovers

Winning with the Sicilian Dragon 2

Chris Ward

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To Debbie: obviously!

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Preface

This is the Sicilian Dragon. Need I say more? Well “yes”, I suppose, is the answer because I’ve got another 220 odd pages to fill! So forget the likes of *Star Wars*, *Terminator*, *Silence of the Lambs* etc, as *Winning with the Sicilian Dragon 2* is the sequel that you’ve really been waiting for?!

On a serious note, I would like to thank all of you readers. I must say that over the years I have been overwhelmed by the positive response to my 1994 book *Winning with the Dragon*. I was certainly wary about writing a follow-up because I really wanted to provide something that would live up to people’s expect-

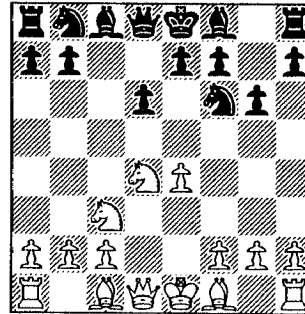
ations. The good news is that after much sweat, blood, hard work etc. (donations gratefully accepted!), I do believe that I have succeeded in my aim.

I wanted to be both informative and entertaining and I don’t think you’ll be disappointed (please note, though, if you are skim-reading this at a bookstall, there is no money back guarantee!).

Well you are now entering a thrill zone. Wherever you are in this world, happy reading!

Chris Ward
Beckenham, May 2001

1 Introducing the Dragon



Welcome back to the exciting world of the Sicilian Dragon. There has never been any doubting the entertaining qualities of this fascinating, razor sharp opening, but as regards soundness there had always been a question mark or two hanging over it. However, that issue was finally laid to rest when in the 1995 World Championship the world's greatest ever player Garry Kasparov gave it the ultimate seal of approval. Don't ask me how, but I had a sneaky suspicion that he would whip out 5...g6 and that's exactly what he did on four separate occasions during his title match with Viswanathan Anand. I don't claim to be much of a historian but there can't be many Black openings that have scored 75% at such a high level. Indeed the Indian Grandmaster was shell-shocked by the employment of this opening and, although the encounters were not all totally convincing, the Dragon

clearly played a big part in brushing aside Anand's challenge.

Throughout this book I will refer to *Winning with the Dragon* as *WWTD* and since that first volume I have also hosted a Dragons site at www.chesspublishing.com. I was always amazed by the popularity of the Dragon at junior and club level but, having received plenty of mail through the website, I have discovered that even players who don't include it in their repertoire enjoy following the games, almost religiously, and even carry out their own home investigations. Yes, while perhaps playing the Petroff or Alekhine by day, in the evenings it's as if Dragon bishops and exchange sacrifices take centre stage in their fantasies!

I'm not sure what you readers were expecting with this book. There has never been any intention on my part to imply that what I provided you with in *WWTD* was wrong and to chuck all of that out and use this instead. No, nothing could be further from the truth. I am still proud of my first publication and, although the odd specific variation may appear a little dubious now, I warned you of that possibility at the time. You would expect nothing less from the most fiercely debated opening known to chess theory. Sure, evaluations of lines have changed and will continue to do so over time. It was, however,

particularly the ideas and principles that I was eager for you to take on board and if I could illustrate those by means of some interesting and thrilling encounters, then all the better. I may have switched systems in some instances here, but my main aim has essentially been to reiterate the concepts of *WTTD* and, by using different practical examples, provide some additional ideas. If you have a copy of *WTTD* then so much the better, but the present book is far more than just an update. True, I haven't repeated some of those stories that hopefully kept you amused last time. You know, such as how Kasparov was lucky to draw with me: thought I'd get that one in again! Obviously I couldn't avoid mentioning the occasional old line, but you will find plenty of fresh material.

Although this is not a complete Dragon book in the sense that it is clearly not comprised of billions of variations including A4315b and the likes, I believe that I have provided a more than adequate Black repertoire. If you wish to adopt a different line here and there, then that's fine. I won't take offence—honest!

Of course, it is inevitable that you will come across plenty of analysis where I haven't explained every move. Sicilian Dragon books are addictive but if I have got a criticism of them it's that the same old references are all too often churned out over and over again. I think that I

have broken with that tradition here as I disclose a great deal of my own home preparation and thoughts on standard lines. It's true that since my writing *WTTD* I have become a GM and I hope a better player. Having retained the Dragon as my main defence, (not that I'm always given the opportunity to play it!) arguably, my assessments have improved in accuracy. And, if I've not been on form, the occasional silicon friend has been known to chip in with his views! I am a little sceptical of those at times as we can't all play like computers, but there's no denying that the likes of Fritz have their uses. Oops, there I go again, assuming the masculine form. I must apologise to any female readers (human or machine!) about my automatic use of 'he' rather than 'she'. If it's of any consolation, I've noticed that I've even referred to 'he' or 'Black' when the player in question is me!

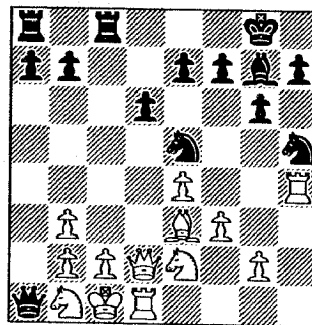
You will note that a new section has appeared, but do not get too excited by the existence of chapter 12. It is a rough guide to the Anti-Sicilians from a Dragon player's perspective and will not show you how to beat all those spoil-sport White Anti-Sicilian exponents. By the way, if you do discover exactly how that is done, please let me know!

Well, that's enough waffling on my part. It's time to improve your fire-breathing skills!

2 Important Dragon Concepts

The Power of the Dragon Bishop

One of life's little mysteries is why the so-called 'Dragon bishop' nearly always seems to make much more of an impact on a game of chess than any other minor piece. I am of course referring to Black's dark-squared bishop. Effectively born on g7, it has so much to say in your typical Dragon encounter, even if it never actually moves from its home in front of the castled king. When playing the Dragon you will notice how, even with a black knight on f6, the bishop exerts latent pressure on White's d4-knight—and if this moves away the pressure then transfers to the c3-knight. Clearly, if both of White's knights are removed from the diagonal, the b2 pawn will come under scrutiny and plenty of attacking possibilities follow. Yes, our favourite bishop cuts across the board like a laser, as in the following basic example which shows its raw offensive power.



Being the only way to block the check from the black queen, the white knight has had to withdraw to b1. This, however, leaves the b2-pawn ripe for some attention and now both ...♖xf3 and ...♘c4 do the trick. Though, in either case, it will be the e5-knight that moves, the key is the unleashing of the sleeping giant on g7. To avoid mate White must suffer heavy material loss.

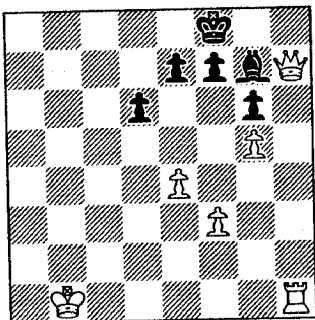
Throughout this book you will encounter numerous examples of the attacking power of the Dragon bishop, but also its defensive qualities should not be underrated.

Frequently, in the Yugoslav Attack, White sets about aligning his queen and rook on the h-file. This may well be accompanied by a sacrifice of the h-pawn in order to target the h7-square when an important task for White is to eliminate the f6-knight. Attempts to do this by advancing the g-pawn to g5 will only result in the knight blocking the h-file with ...♘h5 (where it will be able to rejoin the game via g3 or f4 when the threats to the king have subsided).

If available (and note that Black tries to ensure it is not!), White's best method of removing this knight is by the simple ♘d5. On the other hand, a common mistake is to concede the dark-squared bishop for it.

In the following diagram I have retained the relevant pieces resulting

from a White caveman-style attack down the h-file.



The queen has made it to h7, but the black king has merely been nudged to the side.

With no control over the dark squares around Black's monarch, White cannot make any obvious progress. He would dearly love to 'beam down' a bishop to h6 but of course the inference here is that it was a mistake to concede this piece earlier. Note, though, that even if the bishop were still on the board, it couldn't jump over the g-pawn, thereby highlighting the error of playing g4-g5 prematurely.

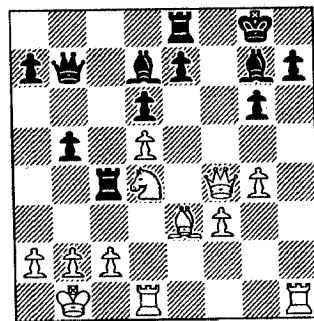
With another white rook present, one idea (that will occasionally crop up in the main body of the book) involves the trebling of the major pieces along the h-file. This (imagine the other rook on, say, h4) would herald the threat of the pretty finish, ♖h8+ ♔xh8, ♖xh8+ ♚g7, ♖1h7 mate. However, Black can prevent this by creating an escape square for his king. Yes, ...e6 should do the trick, providing e7 as just that square. Also observe that I have deliberately left the white king in the diagram. With 19 'points' of firepower being thwarted by the Dragon bishop, it is likely that Black will achieve rather more success on the other side of the board!

As implied, the easiest way to neutralize both the attacking and defensive possibilities that the Dragon bishop offers is for White to exchange it for his own dark-squared bishop. This means that White must studiously guard against Black's attempts to swap this piece for a knight, usually by means of either ...♘g4 or ...♘c4. Given the choice, in order to safeguard this key piece, White should instead prefer to concede his light-squared bishop.

Though I am one of the Dragon bishop's biggest fans, I must issue a warning. It can't always be expected to do everything on its own. As a solitary defender, its elimination by a White sacrifice could easily prove fatal.

In the following diagram, the move 22 ♖h2 would not be unattractive as White has a later ♖h6 to aid the attack. However, in this position from a fairly recent game, there was a more devastating continuation that illustrated a theme which is useful to know.

M.Ardeshi White
A.Hayrapetian Black
Fajr Open 2001



22 ♖xh7!!

A crushing blow and a tactic definitely worth remembering. The rook

cannot be captured by the black king as then 23 ♖f7! leaves the terminal 24 ♖h1 next on the agenda.

22... ♖xd5 23 ♖xg7+

The exchange is a cheap price to pay for such a valuable piece, particularly when the end is clearly in sight.

23... ♗xg7 24 ♖f5+

White wins the queen, although 24 ♖h6+ ♗f7 25 ♖h7+ would also lead to mate. When deprived of its favourite companion, the black king is a forlorn figure.

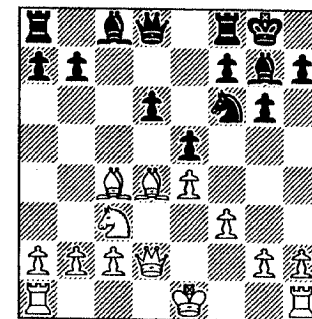
Finally, it should not be assumed that the Dragon bishop is only of use in stormy mating attacks with kings castled on opposite sides. Indeed, it is equally powerful in quieter variations where the enemy kings reside on the same side of the board. There, in contrast to the dark-squared 'King's Indian bishop' which is often hemmed in by pawns on d6, e5 and f4, it may lend long-distance assistance to a queenside minority attack. It goes without saying that a bishop is a bishop, and in an Open Sicilian ending, it's bound to be quite useful anyway!

The role of the e7 pawn

Frequently referred to in *WWTD*, one beautiful aspect of the Sicilian Dragon, especially in comparison to other Sicilian variations, is the lack of weaknesses in Black's pawn structure. The d6-pawn, which often becomes a liability in, for example, the Classical, Najdorf, Pelikan and Scheveningen variations (to name but a few!), is adequately defended in the Dragon by the e7-pawn. This, of course, has not had to move to

make way for the development of the king's bishop, which has other ways of getting into the action.

Having, in my time, played over bucket-loads of Dragon games and of course witnessed one or two first hand, I cringe when I see the horrible ...e5 played. As you will discover by the end of this book, there is a place for this move, but not just to create the positional weaknesses as seen here...



There are four blatant problems with the just played ...e5:

(a) The d6-pawn is now backward and therefore extremely weak. There are few pieces available to defend it, especially with the bishop on g7 rather than e7. Meanwhile after his attacked bishop moves, White will easily be able to pressurise d6 with the likes of ♖d1 (or 0-0-0) and ♘b5.

(b) Black has allowed the d5-square to become an outpost for White. Previously White may have wanted to place a knight there, but may have been worried about it being menaced by a timely...e6. That is no longer a concern as there is no way back for this e-pawn.

(c) Without doing anything, White's light-squared bishop now finds itself on a nice clear diagonal. It too can maintain its pressure on Black's f7-pawn, and through to the king on g8, without fear of its scope being reduced by ...e6.

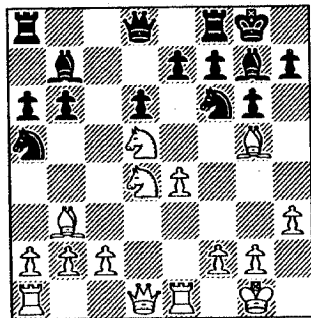
(d) Finally, and perhaps the worst sin of all, Black has blocked in his own Dragon bishop. Its attacking potential is now extremely limited and White may do well to refrain from exchanging it off. After retreating to e3, a future ♔h6 should probably be withheld as, in contrast to the g7-bishop, White's dark-squared bishop also has an influence on the queenside. In terms of minor pieces a far from improbable nightmare scenario is that Black will be left with a 'bad' bishop against a 'good' knight occupying the outpost on d5.

Regarding (b) and (c), occasionally ...e5 will be a good idea if it can be followed by a quick ...d5 as well. With so many white pieces usually controlling the centre, this is usually very difficult to achieve. However, if Black can indeed force White's e-pawn to capture on d5, then his bishop may be able to re-enter the game via ...e4.

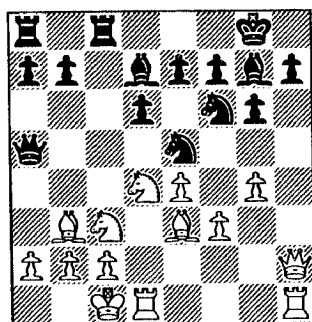
In playing ...e6, only the first of the above concessions really applies, although the scope of Black's light-squared bishop is of course also reduced—at least temporarily.

With this in mind, I wouldn't blame any readers who now decide that their e7-pawn is not going anywhere and indeed I, too, more or less let it be for the earlier part of my Dragon playing days. However, the truth is that there are some circumstances in which the e-pawn can prove to be of great use, even when

weighed up against our list of created concessions. The following are positions (snapshots from the book's main body) in which ...e6 is the recommended move.



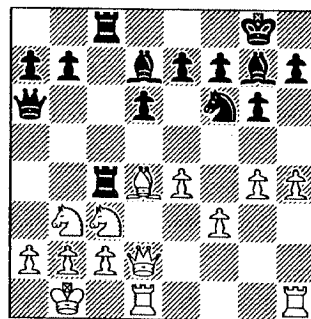
Here, Black naturally wants to remove the troublesome intruder on d5, but knows that capturing it on its present square will only result in undesirable pressure on e7 from both the bishop on g5 and the rook on e1. Admittedly, after 13...e6 14 ♖xf6+ ♗xf6, Black has a weak d-pawn. However White's e-pawn is equally a target and, in addition to play elsewhere for Black, a long-term plan of ...e5 and ...d5 is not such a dream.



With the just played 15 ♖h2, White threatens the simple 16 ♗d5, in order to get at the h7-square and obtain a winning attack. As you will soon discover, the typical reflex response would be 15...♙xc3, but in

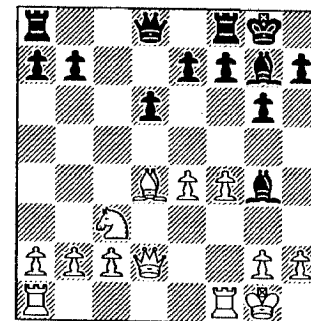
order to try and prevent structural damage, White intends to meet that with the sneaky pin: 16 ♔d2. I'm not sure he really succeeds after 16...♗d3+ 17 ♖b1 ♗xb2 but nevertheless theory still recommends the logical 15...e6!. This removes White's main threat and simultaneously shuts out the b3-bishop. It is extremely difficult for White to make progress with his attack, but even if he does do so, as we saw earlier there is now an escape route available to the black king. White remains a pawn down and unable to exploit properly the main drawback of Black's move: the weakened d-pawn.

The following positions show ...e5! in a good light:



The d4-bishop is the fulcrum of White's position. Placed solidly in the centre, it presents a potential challenge to the Dragon bishop on its favourite diagonal. White may later seek a trade via g4-g5, to advance his attack, while the current support offered to the c3-knight dissuades an exchange sacrifice. After 17...e5!, though, the bishop loses all of its privileges. Strictly speaking (a), (b) and (d) all apply but for tactical reasons, in the form of 18 ♔e3 ♔xg4! 19 fxg4 ♙xc3! 20 bxc3

♗xe4, these rather pale into insignificance. There is no longer an outpost on d5 and there is no white knight available to occupy it anyway. I suppose the d6-pawn is officially a target but there will be no time for White to do anything about it. The Dragon bishop has been blocked out but will make a devastating reappearance after the likely ...♗xc3+ and ...e4.



Here Black has the bishop-pair but White's centralised bishop is trying to have a say in that matter. With the bishop-trapping 13 f5 a serious threat, White can hope that his queen and knight partnership will offer some serious attacking chances, particularly when twinned with his space advantage. By playing 12...e5!, Black chooses the perfect time to strike out at the centre. After 13 fxe5 dxe5, Black will find a way to activate his dark-squared bishop whereas the e4-pawn will always remain isolated. Best, therefore, is 13 ♔e3 but, after 13...exf4, the b2-g7 diagonal is re-opened while the light-squared bishop need no longer be nervous.

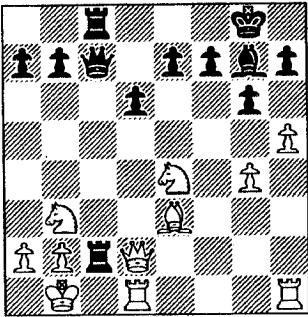
The use of the c-file

After White plays d4 and Black ...cxd4, thereby defining the

opening as an 'Open' Sicilian, Black's rooks have a means of entry into the game that should not be neglected. Of course, rooks love open files and seventh ranks, but half-open files are not to be sniffed at either and Black has one of those at his immediate disposal.

From the moment a black rook appears on the c-file, White must guard against the next-up thematic ... Axc3 exchange sacrifice, as well as concern himself with a more obvious problem. Whether White castles kingside or queenside, there is always the danger that his c-pawn will come under attack. Depending upon the urgency of the position, Black can double or even treble his major pieces on the c-file, and remove the flimsy cover of the white c3 knight with ...b5-b4.

The following position is reached from a variation in chapter 5. Here Black has sacrificed two pieces to enable his rook to advance to its desired location.



Yes, the black rook is beautifully placed on c2 and if the white queen moves then next-up is the capturing of the juicy b2-pawn. I'm sure you haven't forgotten about that bishop on g7 and will notice how all of Black's remaining pieces combine perfectly, while a pawn armada

waits in the wings in case of an endgame.

Occasionally Black's light-squared bishop may get the opportunity to pressurise c2 and even if White manages to move his knight and set up a barrier by c2-c3, there is always the old 'minority attack'. Indeed a plan of ...b5-b4 is likely to be successful either as an offensive weapon or as a means of reaching a favourable endgame.

To facilitate ... Ac8 , Black must first move his light-squared bishop. I have known ... Axe6 (taking a pawn) to be its first move, but more likely is ... Aed7 otherwise. In some of the 'quieter' lines (i.e. those that don't involve do-or-die attacks) sometimes the c8-bishop can also perform well on b7.

With the black queen out of the way (usually on a5), the rooks are connected and ready, if required, to double up. The most common way of achieving this 'doubling up' involves the ... Ac4-e5(a5)-c4 manoeuvre, after which White is likely to exchange his light-squared bishop for it. This is because not only will he probably want to preserve his more important dark-squared bishop (assuming that it is on e3), but also the b2 pawn will be a problem for him. Indeed, even if it is protected, the chances are that there will be a combination involving ... Axb2 , for example undermining the defence of the white c3 knight.

After ... Axc4 Axc4 , the black rook will be difficult to budge, with b2-b3 generally being unattractive for White. Instead, although ... Ac8-c7 , to prepare doubling, is hardly ever used as it tends to walk into the likes of Ab5 or Ad5 , the alternative ... Ac8-c5 often fulfils a

useful purpose. Though the rook could conceivably be vulnerable to White's dark-squared bishop or suffer in the event of Ab3 becoming available to White, on the c5-square it actually provides some extra bite along the 4th rank.

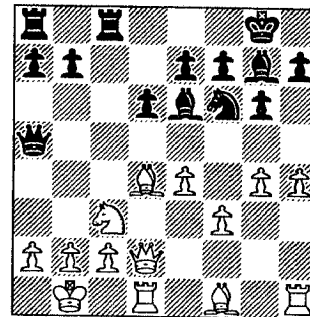
While the c-file is obviously a very useful asset for Black, the d-file is of less value to White as he usually finds negotiating the d-pawn too tough a task.

The good old ... Axc3

Let's face it, rooks are good pieces. They go left, right, up and down and they are capable of covering much ground, cutting off kings and capturing enemy pawns on light and dark squares alike. If your opponent gets an outside passed pawn then the best man for the job of halting it is a rook. Forking and pinning are nice, but little compares to that feeling of doubling your rooks on the 7th rank and hoovering the opponent's position to your heart's content.

Yes, believe me, I, as much as the next man, needed to be convinced of the virtues of the thematic exchange sacrifice, particularly as I was quite materialistic as a junior.

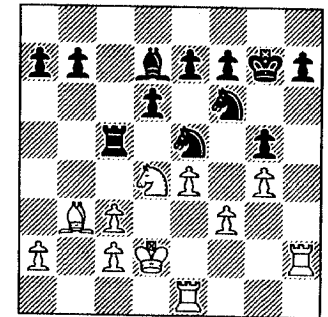
Obviously, continuations such as the following are easy to fathom:



13... Axc3 ! 14 Axc3 Axa2 + 15 Ac1 Axe4 !

The justification is purely tactical. Often such sacrifices lead to mate but when (as above) the cushion of a clearly superior endgame exists, the pill is easy to swallow. But what of situations where there is no big hit and the harsh reality is that you are conceding a straight-line expert for a measly knight?

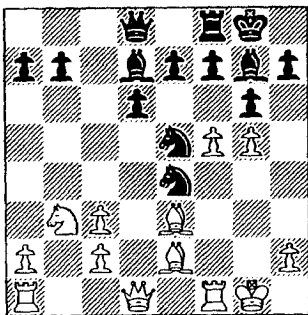
Basically then, I am merely informing the reader that I am well aware of the difficulty that less experienced players may have in coming to terms with this key concept. First off though, I need to point out that a piece is a piece and, with other bits around, it's not all just about a simple comparison of a rook versus a knight. The crux of the matter is that ... Axc3 (particularly characteristic of the Dragon but also frequently played in other Sicilian variations) is invariably played with Black already a pawn to the good. The pawn now on c3 (after bxc3) is occasionally won immediately and, even if it is not, White's queenside pawns are shattered beyond repair, while Black's pawn structure remains impeccable.



A key feature, as illustrated in the above diagram, is that the positions reached are far from desirable for

rooks. Black has only bagged one pawn for the exchange but the white rooks lack any serious action. Achieving activity on the half-open b-file is unlikely, especially when you consider that White's light-squared bishop will be a target as it is. He can double on the h-file but all that really does is prevent Black from making much of his extra outside pawn. In contrast, the black knights ensure that the enemy pawn structure remains fixed while Black's own rook sits pretty.

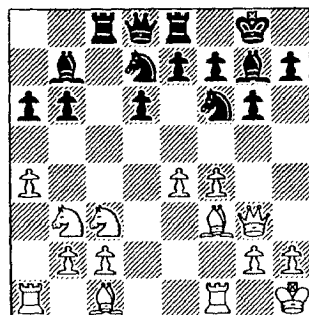
This sort of endgame is covered in more detail later in the book, as is the middlegame shown in the next diagram.



White has launched his kingside pawns with aggressive intent but things have backfired on him with the loss of his c3-knight. Black gave up his rook in order to grab the e4-pawn and now, with so much open space around the white king, one can see that this is now more of a position for minor pieces anyway.

The structural consideration is a major point and is something that even experienced tournament players clearly continue to neglect. Aiming for some sort of attack, White's last move to reach the following position was 14 ♖(e1)-g3?!

R.Willmoth White
R.Felgaer Black
Malaga Open 2001



Frankly this last move was like waving a red rag to a bull. White severely underestimates the positional danger he is in.

14...Rxc3! 15 bxc3 Qxe4

Text book (this one and others!) stuff. The exchange is a cheap price to pay for a pawn and the damage inflicted to White's queenside pawn structure.

16 ♙xe4 ♙xe4

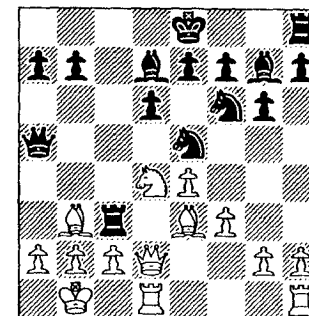
Soon came the likes of ...♗a8 and ...♖c8 and, with all of Black's pieces quickly flooding into the game, it's no great surprise that it was Black who was ultimately victorious.

Once confident enough, rather than shying away from ...Rxc3, Dragon players may end up looking for any opportunity to bash this move out with a glint in their eye and maximum attention from spectators.

I must say, however, that although I will continue to preach the merits of this thematic exchange sacrifice, even I have been surprised by the apparently casual instances in which very strong players have been known to employ it. Three

memorable (well for me at least!) occasions on which it has occurred almost out of the blue are:

B.Lalić White
J.Hodgson Black
East Kilbride 1998



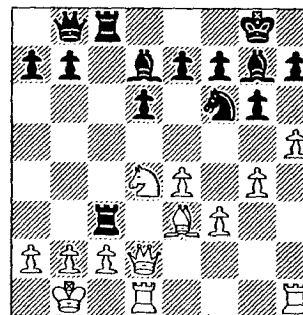
White has not yet 'weakened' his kingside by advancing his pawns and Black is certainly not a pawn up. Nevertheless the queens now came off with the reigning British Champion apparently giving up the exchange just like that.

These examples have stuck in my mind and I'm not about to suggest to the reader that each one was a good decision. Nevertheless you can't argue with the practicality. Amazingly, Black scored 2½/3!

Sacrificial Knights

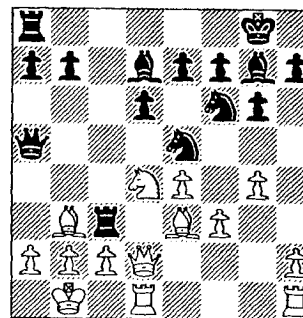
I guess a big part of this whole section is really to do with opening up the Dragon bishop to devastating effect. Occasionally, when White has advanced his kingside pawns in a threatening manner, Black will have the sacrifice ...♙xg4 available. This, in conjunction with a ...Rxc3, will leave the e-pawn *en prise* to a black knight after the f3-pawn captures the bishop. An alternative way to negotiate White's pawns and clear the long diagonal of its congestion (here being four knights!) is demonstrated below.

E.Mortensen White
V.Mikhalevski Black
Copenhagen 2000

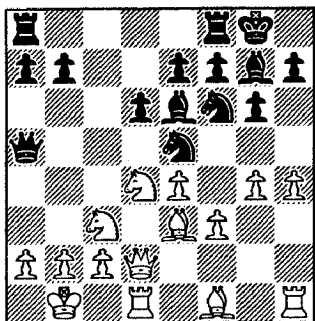


True, the h7-pawn might have suffered if White had been allowed to play ♘d5, but with the queen on b8 there will be no ...♙xg4 follow up.

S.Beshukov White
M.Turner Black
Hastings Premier 2001



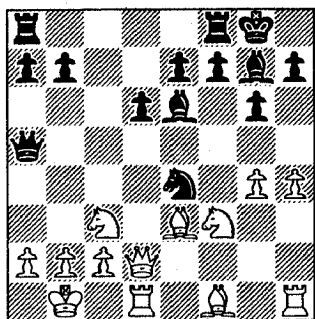
On his way to another GM norm in this tournament, the talented young English IM confessed later to not knowing his theory. His logic: if in doubt, take on c3!



13...Dxg4! 14 fxg4 Qxc3 and with White unable to recapture on c3 because of ...Wxa3-a2-a1 mate, things are looking pretty grim.

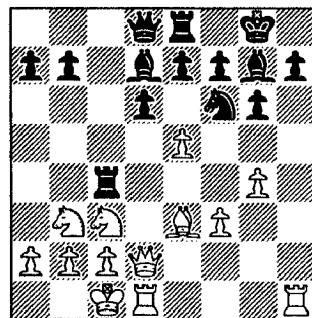
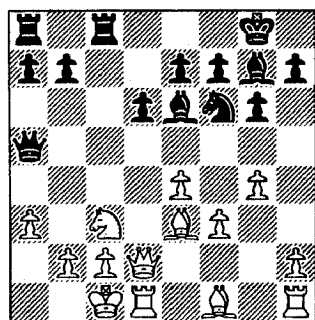
As you will discover, though, even in the Yugoslav Attack it's not all about checkmate and in fact the endgame should always remain a serious consideration. The next position is a long way from an ending but the principle still applies.

12...Dxf3! 13 Dxf3 Dxe4!



14 Dxe4 Wxa2+ 15 Qc1 Wa1 mate

So, okay, the possibility to give up both knights in this manner won't come along every day but a single knight sac as below isn't that unusual.



It always pays to watch out for e4-e5, as played on White's 17th move above. The idea is that 17...dxe5 runs into 18 g4-g5 winning either the f6-knight or the d7-bishop. Now, given that White has already offloaded his h-pawn in the cause of an h-file assault, Black will of course secure a third pawn for the piece by taking on e5. However, although this has been known to occur, particularly when the queen isn't being pinned on d8 and the d7-bishop can usefully slide to f5, the drawback is that the Dragon bishop finds itself too obscured.

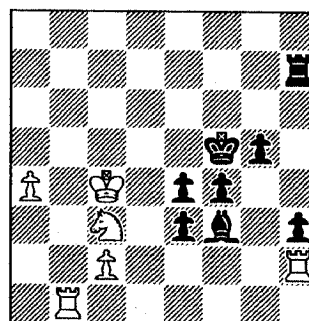
The not necessarily desirable retreat ...De8 is not available as Black placed his rook there last go to enable him to meet Qh6 with ...Qh8. Though the knight looks short of squares, the solution of course is 17...Dxg4! 18 fxg4 Qxg4

Black ultimately ends up with three connected passed pawns for the piece and, as well as providing a useful barrier for the king, these will certainly prove very menacing when rolling down the board in the latter stages of the game.

The Endgame and Assorted Tips

Particularly in Yugoslav Attack variations, the opportunity to obtain a kingside pawn majority, as just described, is a serious reality. Sometimes it's three connected pawns vs a bishop or knight and sometimes it's four or even five vs a rook. Yes, that's a lot of potential queens and my advice to Black is: make the most of your king and have one piece put aside to stop any unlikely white passed pawn. Below, Black got everything spot on and no doubt the experience was immensely enjoyable.

A.Kujala-G.Nesis
Correspondence 1995



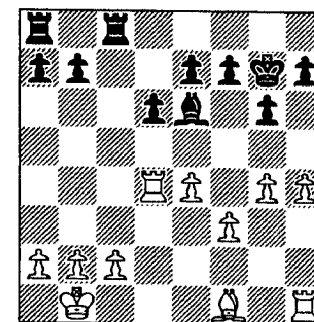
43 a5 Qg2 44 a6 Ra7 45 Ra1 Qg4 0-1

Clearly White found it just too painful to play on, but Black could hardly go wrong.

Although it is dangerous to make too many generalisations, I would suggest that, more often than not, Dragon endgames are at least equal for Black. With or without queens, the c-file tends to be of more use to Black than the d-file is to White and the first player is also worse off if he has advanced his kingside pawns in a failed attack. Usually Black is encouraged to attack with 'pieces rather than pawns' and it therefore follows that his queenside pawns will probably not be similarly weakened. Actually even if they have been advanced, the a- and b-pawns are generally not so accessible to the enemy king. Regarding White's pawn structure, though, the black monarch invariably has squares such as e5 and f4 to invade, when safe, (i.e. when White has insufficient mating material floating around) in order to inflict some serious damage.

Should White prevent a simple king walk in the manner illustrated below then Black must find alternative ways to activate the required pieces.

F.Burgalat White
P.Trifunović Black
Mar del Plata 1953



Typically, it is the black king that is more on top of the action and, with ...♖f6-e5-f4 a serious threat, White's next move is as good as forced. Though certainly not 100% necessary it would be rubbing salt into the wound if Black should also fix White's pawns on the same colour as his bishop with moves such as ...h6 and ...g5. The game continued with:

18 g5 h6!

Black must not simply accept that his king has no way in and here he rightly sets about negotiating White's pawn barrier.

19 ♖h3 ♗xh3 20 ♖xh3 hxg5

Keeping it simple although 20...♗h8 also looks promising.

21 hxg5 ♗h8 22 ♖xh8 ♖xb8 23 a4

Instead 23 ♖c1 would help towards centralising the king. It would also prevent the immediate back rank mate threat but of course is no use on the (soon to be) passed pawn pushing front.

23...♗h5

Black has gained control of the only open file and now goes hunting for pawns.

24 ♖c4

Activating the rook, but, with his king so far away, Black will always win a pawn race. 24 f4 would have been met by 24...♗h4.

24...♗xg5 25 ♖c7 ♗g3 26 ♖xb7 ♗xf3 27 ♖xa7 g5

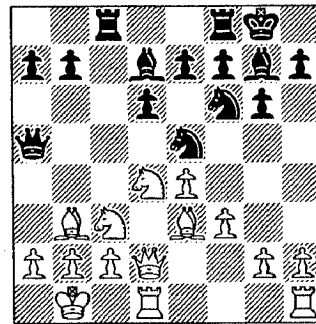
And Black was first to the finishing post.

Finally, some other bits and bobs to bear in mind both when reading through this book and playing your own Dragon games:

(a) To reiterate, if White eventually gets around to playing ♔d5, Black should try to avoid the reflex

response of ...♔d5 even though the enemy knight controls several useful squares. It could well be that this exchange is the best reply, but at least consider the awkward pressure that might arise down the e-file after exd5. Life will be more uncomfortable while it remains there but there may be alternatives. Faced with this dilemma, you could possibly capture the white knight at some stage with your light-squared bishop, chase it away with ...e6, or play around it until you are ready to take it, and then round up the d5-pawn.

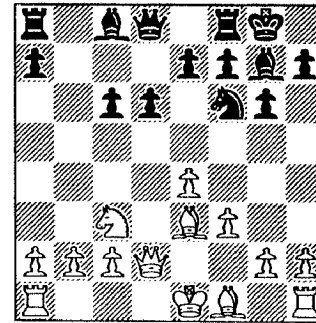
Indeed ♔d5 is a White possibility that should always be on Black's mind. So long as it is, then you will never fall for the following trap. White played the popular quiet move 12 ♖b1 and Black responded with the inaccurate 12...♗ac8? thus reaching the position below:



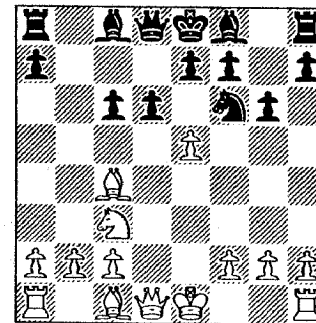
It was clear that Black wanted a rook on the c-file but he chose the wrong one. As the black king is unable to go to f8 at the end of the following sequence, he is punished by: 13 ♔d5! ♗xd2 14 ♔xe7+. White regains the queen next and has succeeded in netting an important pawn.

(b) Something that I know novices often worry about when playing the Dragon is that White might play

♔(d4)xc6, and hence they unnecessarily prepare ...♔c6 with ...♔d7. When pushed for an explanation for their fear, they struggle, eventually pin-pointing the now isolated a-pawn as a weakness.

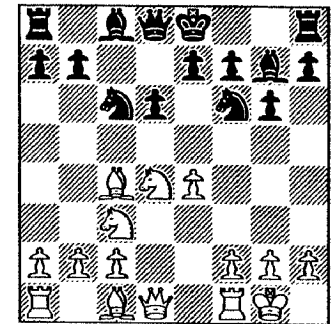


That is, of course, a rather flimsy excuse and this 'weakness' is significantly outweighed by the benefits. Besides, although this pawn is undeniably isolated, Black in fact has no more pawn islands than before the knight trade. What he does have, though, is a terrific half-open b-file for a rook to exert (in conjunction with the latent Dragon bishop power) some devilish pressure on b2. In addition, Black now has a firm grip on the d5-square, which is useful both for keeping out a white knight and perhaps helping to prepare a later ...d5.



If White can follow up with a quick e4-e5 then there could be problems, but the above position, which is a result of a Black move-order mistake, is a rare example. The point is that here 8...dxe5? would fall foul of 9 ♔xf7+!

Although one must accept that this would win the house, I must confess that I also used to have an unjustified fear of the same position a move on:

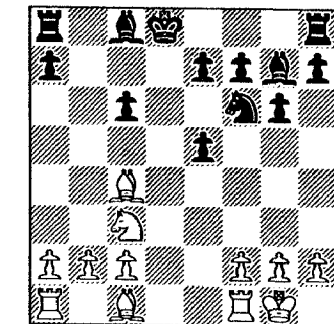


I always felt more comfortable castling before playing ...♔c6 in order to avoid the likes of:

8 ♔xc6 bxc6 9 e5 dxe5 10 ♗xd8+

Note 10 ♔xf7+ doesn't work now as this time (after 10...♔xf7) the queen is protected by the rook.

10...♔xd8



However what I had failed to take into consideration is that now, although 11 ♙xf7 leaves Black with a dodgy pawn structure, of more relevance is the bishop being trapped behind enemy lines via 11... e6! .

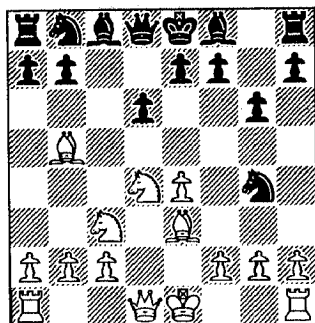
I would now go so far as to say that ♜xc6 is a move that Black should usually hope for, rather than fear and, even when having the choice, one cannot normally go wrong by recapturing on c6 with the b7-pawn rather than with a piece.

(c) Although Black plays ...d6, usually as early as move 2, it is generally accepted that if he can later achieve the pawn break ...d6-d5 without repercussion, then he has at least equalized. A brief explanation for this is that the inevitable opening up of the centre, following a timely ...d5, results in White's centrally posted pieces becoming targets for the black rooks. At present, this may sound somewhat vague but all will become clear as you read on.

(d) Always keep an eye out for the possibility of playing ... ♘g4 , as it is a definite bonus if you can manage to exchange off White's dark-squared bishop (although preferred, the light-squared bishop is no mean catch either). White should usually guard against this mainly post-development threat, as the e3-bishop has difficulty moving away due to its important role of defending the centre.

Note, though, please do NOT fall for ♙b5+ , one of the oldest tricks in

the book (well this book anyway!). For example in the following position after 6... ♘g4?? 7 ♙b5+ .



Yes, seeing that 7... ♙d7 allows 8 ♜xg4 , the fact is that you would suffer heavy material loss and it certainly wouldn't be good for sales!

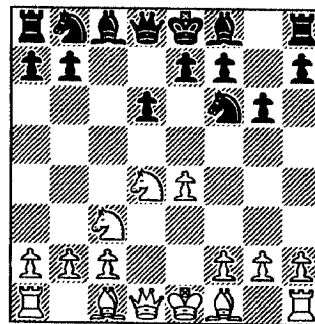
(e) Finally, in the same vein as ... ♘g4 , another move to look out for is ... ♜b6 . This may surprise the reader as, although here the queen may attack the (often poisoned) pawn on b2, on b6 it might be in the firing line of a potential ♜(d4)-f5 , unleashing the bishop on e3. Indeed, I am far from stating that ... ♜b6 is always a good move, rather I am pointing out, and I agree vaguely, that the move ... ♜b6 can occasionally pose awkward problems for White — particularly when the opening has drifted off the well known tracks.

You'll know what I mean when the opportunity arises in your future encounters, but it's alright, you don't have to thank me: I'm just doing my job!

3 Early Deviations

When starting a game, unless you possess psychic powers you can't be sure whether you are even going to get an Open Sicilian and thus the chance to employ your favourite opening. In fact these days I generally don't believe it until I see 3 d4 (i.e. after 1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 d6) as I can recall numerous occasions when I have arrived at my board full of nervous anticipation for the exciting tactical struggle ahead only to be greeted by 3 ♙b5+ or something equally wet! Indeed, chapter 12 details many a system where White deprives Black of the opportunity to enter the Dragon. By the way we're talking Anti-Sicilians and not Bruce Lee films!

The run of the mill start to the Dragon appears after 5...g6 below:



With his 6th move White doesn't necessarily commit himself to one system or another. For example he

could play 6 ♙e3 giving the impression of meeting 6... ♙g7 with 7 f3 (the Yugoslav Attack—see chapters 4-7) only to whip out 7 ♙e2 heading for the Classical variation. Here 6 ♜b3 is of no real independent significance and can also be found within the confines of chapter 8. Indeed there are a few available transpositions like this which, however, cause Black no early confusion as such moves as ... ♙g7 , ... ♜c6 and ...0-0 flow anyhow.

However, from the traditional above starting position, there are three vaguely serious (i.e. this time around 6 ♙g1 doesn't fall into that category and, in case you were wondering, neither does 6 a3 or 6 ♜e2) alternatives to the main continuations that you will find elsewhere in the book. These are:

Game 1: Effectively 6 h3, not as in connection with the 6 ♙c4 chapter but with a ♙e3 , ♜d2 and 0-0-0 idea in mind.

Game 2: No hanging around here, with the swift bishop-pair developing, 6 ♙g5 ♙g7 7 ♙b5+ .

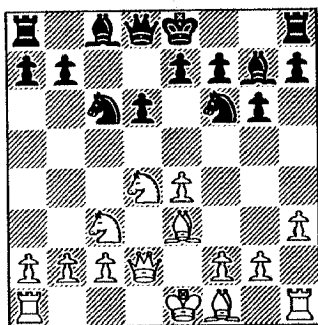
Game 3: The moving-the-same-piece-twice (i.e. before moving others once) rule-breaking, but nevertheless trappy, 6 ♜d5 .

Game 1
G.Piriši White
A.Schneider Black
Budapest 1997

1 e4 c5 2 d3 d6 3 f3 g6 4 d4 cxd4 5 dxd4 e7 6 e3 d6 7 d2

Despite my billing this as 6 h3 (or 6 e3 e7 7 h3) White hasn't had to insert h3 yet as there is still no ...d4 to worry about.

7...d6 8 h3



With 6 h3 White still has the option of transposing to the traditional 6 e4 variation (chapter 9) or, I suppose, a Classical line (chapter 8) but of independent significance is the above position. Essentially (just to confuse you) what I'm saying is that we've reached this offbeat line via a strange, but not entirely uncommon, move order.

8...0-0 9 0-0-0

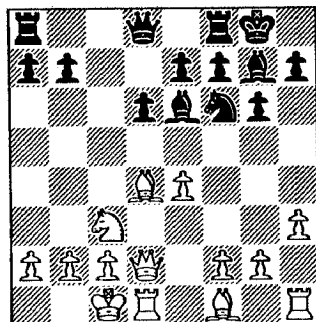
Comparisons can clearly be made with the 9 0-0-0 Yugoslav Attack as the only difference is that here White has a pawn on h3 rather than f3. From an attacking point of view I would suggest that this makes the line inferior, as opening the h-file (with h4-h5) is arguably White's strongest plan. Cynically then, I could observe that there wasn't much point it taking a time out on h3! Of course I would never say

something like that (!) particularly as it's clear that White intends a different formation.

9...dxd4

Not Black's only option, but a very reasonable one that enables his light-squared bishop to comfortably take up an active post.

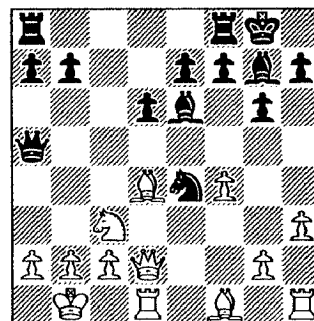
10 e3 d4 e6



11 g4

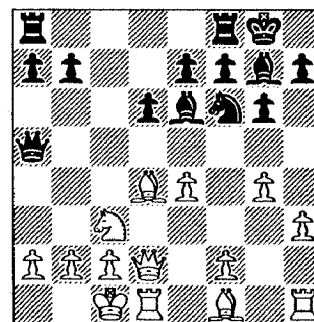
Clearly more to the point than the 11 e3?! Wa5 12 a3 Bab8!? 13 f4 b5! (This may be an obvious move but, as you will discover in the 9 g4 Yugoslav Attack chapter, sometimes ...Bab8 is more to the point than ...Bfc8 as ...b5-b4 gets to the crux of the matter a tad quicker.) 14 g4 b4 15 d1 d5 16 axb4 Wa2 17 e5 de4 18 We1 Bfc8 19 Bf1 Bb7 20 Bf3 Bbc7 21 c3 Bb7 22 e2 a5 23 Bdd3 ed7 24 Wd1 e6 25 eb3 Wa1 26 bxa5 Wxa5 27 ec2 ef8 28 b4 Wa6 29 Bde3 Bbc7 30 Be2 eb5 31 Bh2 Wa1 32 c4 Wa2 33 cxb5 ebx4 34 b6 Bc4 35 b7 Bb8 36 Wd3 Bxb7 37 d1 Bbc7 38 e3 d3+ 39 dxc3 Bxc3 40 Wd2 Bxc2 41 Wxc2 Bxc2 42 Bxc2 Wb3 0-1 of I.Thomas-P.Gemmell, Swansea 1987. Upon 11 f4 Wa5 White must do something about his a-pawn (yes, allowing 12...e3, with the intention of trapping it with 13 b3, walks into 13...Wa3 mate!). So 12 a3 is

normal when the immediate 12...b5!? was my response seen in WWTB. Note 12 e3! isn't advisable because of 12...dxe4!



i.e. 13 dxe4 Wxa2+ 14 e1 Wa1 mate.

11...Wa5



12 a3

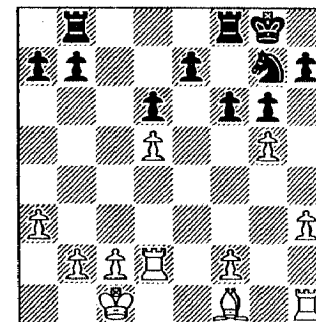
Surprisingly I've faced this system a few times and (even more surprisingly!) I think I've managed so far to record 100% against it. After 12 g5 d5 one opponent generously donated a pawn with 13 a3? dxd4 14 Wxd4 Wxg5+ and rather suffered for the rest of the game: 15 e3 Bfc8 16 e2 d4 17 We3 We5 18 eg4 Bc5 19 de2 dxe2 20 ex2 f5 21 Bd4 f4 22 Wd2 Bf8 23 eg4 exg4 24 hxg4 f3 25 Wd3 b6 26 Bh3 Wf4 27 Bg3 Be5 28 Bc4 d5

29 Bd4 dxe4 30 Wb3+ Wf7 31 We3 Wf4 32 Wb3+ e7 33 Wc3 Bf6 34 g5 Bxg5 35 Bxg5 Wxg5 36 Bxe4 Wc5 37 We1 e7 38 Be3 h5 39 Bc3 Wd4 40 Bd3 Wf4 41 Be3 e6 42 Be4 Wd6 43 Wc3 Wd1+ 44 e2 Wd5+ 45 Wc4 Wxc4+ 46 Bxc4 g5 47 Bc7+ e6 48 Bxa7 g4 49 Ba8 h4 50 Bh8 g3 0-1 S.Sahu-C.Ward, Isle of Man 1996.

12...Bab8 13 g5 d5 14 exg7 d5

Probably this is the best White can do in this system. Feeling that Black's b-file attack will hit home before White's own h-file effort (What use is the early 6 or 7 h3 now?) he must entertain an end-game the likes of which you will see more of in chapter 6.

15...Wxd2+ 16 Bxd2 exd5 17 exd5 f6!



A sensible way to activate a rook or two and ensure that White does all the defending of pawns and the second player all the joyful attacking.

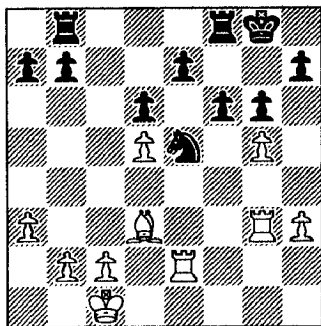
18 f4 dh5 19 f5

19 Bf2 would have left the f-pawn pinned after 19...fxg5 while 19 Bd4 fxg5 20 fxg5 dg3 would lose the bishop.

19...dg3 20 Bg1 dxf5 21 d3 dh4 22 Be2

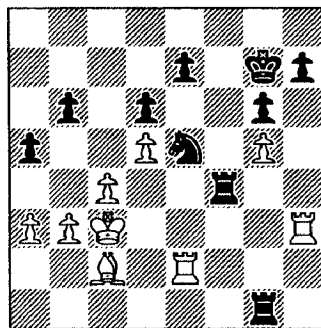
White finally locates a target but Black's solution is perfect as he proceeds to park his knight on prime property.

22...♟f3 23 ♖g3 ♘e5



See what I mean! This superbly placed knight cannot be budged and now Black can just take his time bringing his rooks onto the scene.

24 h4 fxg5 25 hxg5 ♖bc8 26 b3 ♜f4 27 ♘d2 ♘g7 28 c4 b6 29 ♘e3 ♜cf8 30 ♙e4 ♜f1 31 ♘d4 ♜c1 32 ♙c2 ♜f4+ 33 ♘c3 a5 34 ♜h3 ♖g1 0-1



Of course the knight didn't need to move. White can't even get in b4 and c5 as his c-pawn is *en prise*. Plus, with his g-pawn about to drop, he's not about to hang around and face the music of Black's g- and h-*connecteedos* (rather like isolanis but not so lonely!).

Game 2

M.Schula White

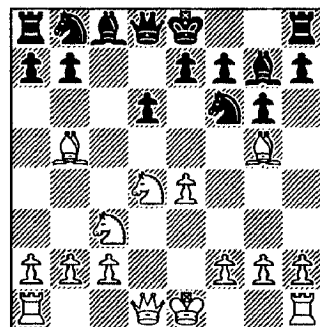
J.Palkövi Black

Czech Team Championships 1997

1 e4 c5 2 ♟f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♟xd4 ♟f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♙g5

Not especially committal at this stage as White still has the option of returning to the Classical variation.

6...♙g7 7 ♙b5+



This however provides independent significance. A popular system with club players, when I see it I'm reminded of those juniors who always have their ideal piece configuration in mind (such as the above) no matter what their opponent does! Though I can see the appeal of whipping out the pieces so quickly, the fact is that it is disadvantageous for White to trade light-squared bishops as he is then extremely susceptible to an enemy invasion on the c4-square.

7...♙d7 8 ♜e2 a6

So unimpressed am I with this system that I would say that 8...h6, 8...♘c6 and even 8...♙xb5 look equally playable.

9 ♙xd7+ ♟bxd7 10 h4

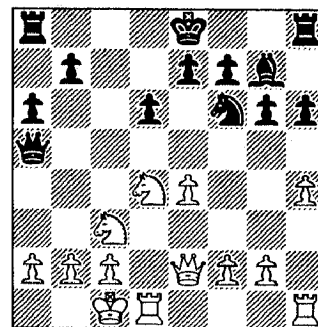
Being overly optimistic, White could delude himself that he has saved on moves like f3 but can still press on in the aggressive manner of

a Yugoslav Attack. The reality is somewhat different.

10...h6 11 ♙xf6?!

Unless this trade can be followed by a stunning ♘d5, it is basically just a big concession. That said, after 11 ♙e3 ♜c8 White would be faced with the usual ...♜xc3. Regarding my previous Yugoslav Attack comments, 12 f3 would obviously be admitting the error of his ways.

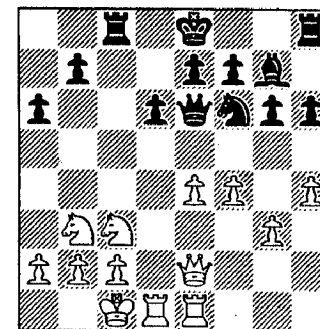
11...♟xf6 12 0-0-0 ♜a5



13 ♟b3

I suppose the only justification for White's play is if he can squash Black in the centre. Hence A.Giaccio-A.Hoffman, Buenos Aires 1993, saw 13 f4 ♜c8 14 e5 dxe5 15 fe5 ♘d5 when 16 ♜g4 was harshly dealt with by (yes you've guessed it!) 16...♜xc3!. That game continued 17 ♟b3 ♜c7 18 bxc3 ♟xc3 19 ♜d4 0-0 20 h5 ♜xe5 21 ♘d2 ♟b5 22 ♜d3 g5 23 a4 ♟a7 24 ♜e1 ♜c7 25 ♟d4 e6 26 ♜e4 ♜c8 27 c3 b5 28 axb5 ♟xb5 29 ♟xb5 axb5 30 ♜b4 ♜c6 31 ♜e2 ♜a8 32 ♜b3 ♙f8 33 ♜f2 ♜a3 34 ♜b1 ♜b6 35 ♜df3 f5 36 ♜e2 b4 37 ♜b2 bxc3+ 0-1.

13...♜e5 14 g3 ♜c8 15 f4 ♜e6 16 ♜he1

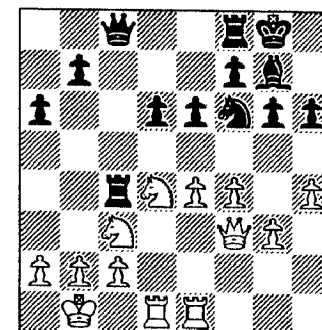


Taking the sting out of an exchange sacrifice on c3. Despite White's ambitious 10 h4, I still believe his only real chance lies in crashing through the centre.

16...0-0 17 ♜f3 ♜c4

Pressurising White's e-pawn and preparing a simple doubling on the c-file. Nevertheless the attacking 17...b5!/? might have been more accurate. By removing this pawn from its current vulnerable location the sting would have been taken out of any e4-e5 push (which I believe was White's only serious hope).

18 ♟d4 ♜c8 19 ♟b1 e6

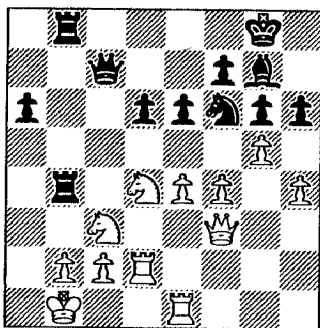


It is worth weakening the d-pawn as the text's upside includes preventing an e5-e6 steamroll while controlling the d5-square.

20 ♜d2 b5 21 a3 ♜c7 22 g4 ♜b8

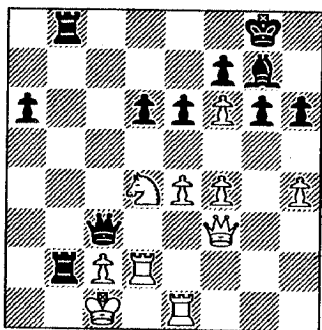
Black's piece attack is always likely to succeed before White's equivalent pawn assault.

23 g5 b4! 24 axb4 ♖cxb4

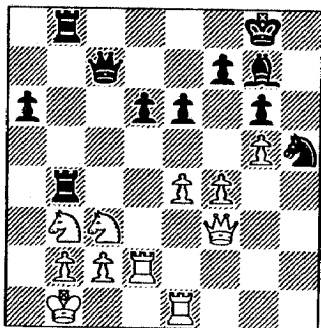


25 ♖b3

Necessary as, for example, 25 gxf6 would have allowed the juicy 25...♖xb2+ 26 ♖c1 ♖xc3!.



Mate would soon follow on b1. 25...hxg5 26 hxg5 ♖h5

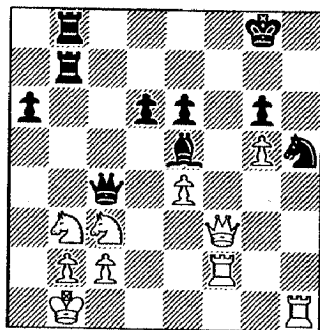


Now the good old Dragon bishop is about to have a say in offensive as well as defensive matters.

27 f5 ♖e5 28 ♖h1 ♖c4

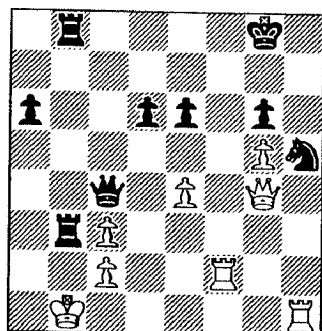
The immediate 28...a5!?, preparing to remove the cover for the b2-pawn via ...a4, also looks attractive.

29 fxe6 fxe6 30 ♖f2 ♖4b7



Black has all of the important squares covered and a breakthrough down the b-file is inevitable.

31 ♖g4 ♖xc3 32 bxc3 ♖xb3+!

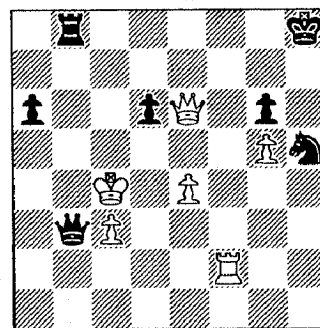


Splat!

33 cxb3 ♖xb3+ 34 ♖c1

34 ♖a1 ♖xc3+ 35 ♖a2 ♖a5 was your basic 'lawnmower' style checkmate.

34...♖b1+ 35 ♖d2 ♖b2+ 36 ♖c1 ♖c1+ 37 ♖e2 ♖xh1 38 ♖xe6+ ♖h8 39 ♖d3 ♖d1+ 40 ♖c4 ♖b3+ 0-1



Oops, but the milk had long been spilt!

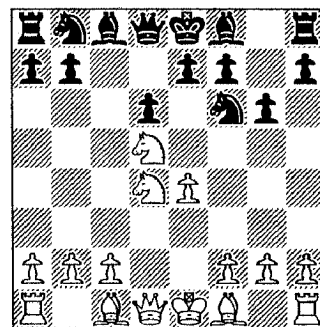
Game 3

J.Littlewood White

R.Pert Black

4NCL, Birmingham 2000

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 g6 6 ♖d5



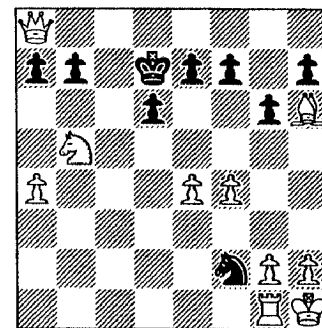
Essentially just a big trick that is only really effective upon 6...♖xe4?. Note 7 ♖b5+ and 8 ♖e2 is then extremely awkward. In fact, bearing in mind ♖f6+ possibilities, Black is probably dead lost already. Incidentally 6...♖xd5?! (hoping to win the d-pawn with ...♖a5+) isn't really worth investigating in view of the 7 ♖b5+ intermezzo.

6...♖g7 7 ♖b5+

Personally I believe that the only justification for White's idea is 7

♖xf6+ ♖xf6 8 ♖h6 preventing Black from castling (and note the 'Classical' stance of 8 ♖e2 ♖c6 9 ♖b3 makes no sense as White has traded his dominant knight [able to go to d5] for Black's defensive equivalent. Still, a rare practical outing did indeed see this: 9...0-0 10 c3 ♖e6 11 ♖e3 d5 12 ♖c5 d4 13 cxd4 ♖xd4 14 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 15 0-0 ♖c8 16 ♖xe6 fxe6 17 ♖g4 ♖b6 18 ♖c1 ♖cd8 19 ♖e1 ♖f4 20 h3 h5 21 ♖d1 ♖xb2 22 ♖c7 ♖f7 23 ♖a5 ♖df8 24 ♖g5 ♖h7 25 ♖xe7 ♖b4 26 ♖xf7+ ♖xf7 27 f4 ♖d2 28 ♖e5 ♖d3 29 ♖e1 ♖c4 30 ♖b3 ♖c3 0-1 U.Lauk-J.Norri, Finland 1996).

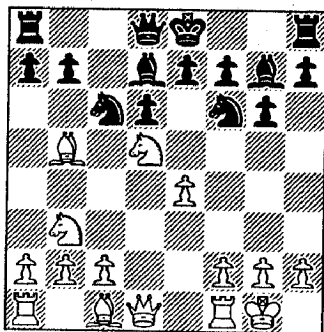
However he is then a bit light on pieces on the queenside and after 8...♖b6! is forced to part company with a pawn or two. Some may recall the 9 ♖b5+ ♖d7 10 ♖xd7+ ♖xd7 11 c3 ♖xb2 12 0-0 ♖xc3 13 ♖b5 ♖c4 14 a4 ♖xa1 15 ♖xa1 ♖e5 16 f4 ♖c5++ 17 ♖h1 ♖g4 18 ♖xh8+ ♖d7 19 ♖xa8 ♖f2+ 20 ♖g1 ♖h3+ 21 ♖h1 ♖g1+ 22 ♖xg1 ♖f2 mate fantasy variation of Smith-Ward, Ramsgate 1989.



Of course back then I probably only put this in *WWTD* to show off(!?) but actually, regarding the whole line, 13...♖c6!? (offering cover on the c-file by the black knight if required) looks more

accurate anyway, when White is still lacking anything like adequate compensation.

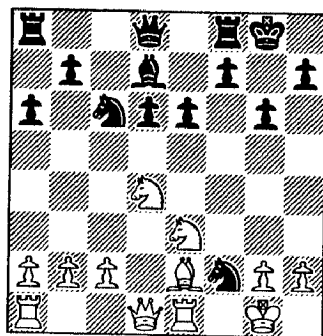
7...♙d7 8 0-0 ♖c6 9 ♗b3



14 ♖xd4 ♗d8

Simple. Black avoids all forks and sets up a grand entry for her majesty.

15 ♗e1 e6 16 ♖e3 ♖xf2! 0-1



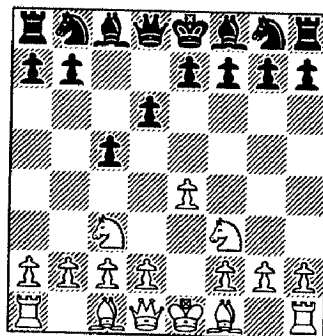
See, I told you that the queen would make a big impact (or at least threaten to). It looked as though she might appear on a5 or b6 but of course the point now is that, on 17 ♖xf2, there follows 17...♗h4+.

Game 4

B.Kurajica White
D.Velimirović Black

Yugoslav Championship 1972

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 ♖c3

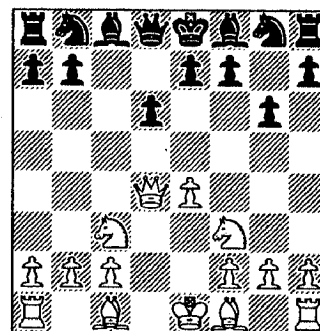


3...g6?

In my book (and this definitely is my book!) a mistake. 3...♖f6 is fine and will return to a normal Dragon after 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♖xd4 g6.

However White may refrain from turning to an Open Sicilian in which case Black may prefer not to have committed this knight to f6 yet. A further explanation of this subtlety is given in chapter 12 but for now just note that the more flexible 3...♖c6 is the subject of the next game.

4 d4 cxd4 5 ♗xd4!

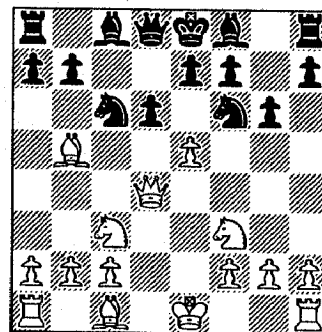


Yes, barely out of the 60s and already there were sneaky anti-Dragon players around!

5...♖f6

Understandably not happy with the prospect of what now follows, I once handled this rather awkward situation with the ugly 5...f6. Hardly an improvement, though—this is definitely a case of prevention being better than any cure, i.e. delete 3...g6?.

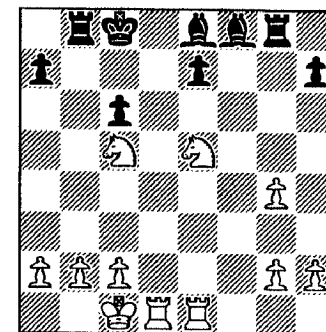
6 e5 ♖c6 7 ♙b5



This pin ruins Black's day. Now he is prevented from developing naturally as all possibilities are structurally weakening.

7...♖h5

Simply grim looking is 7...dxe5 8 ♗xd8+ ♖xd8 9 ♙e3 ♙d7 10 ♙xc6 bxc6 11 ♖xe5 ♙e8 12 0-0-0+ ♖c7 13 ♖c4 ♖g4 14 ♙f4+ ♖c8 15 ♗he1 f6 16 f3 g5 17 ♙d6 ♖e5 18 ♙xe5 fxe5 19 ♖xe5 ♗g8 20 ♖e4 g4 21 fxg4 ♗b8 22 ♖c5



1-0, as seen in B.Parma-R.Hernandez, Havana 1971. All of Black's remaining pawns are isolated and his pieces are on the back rank. No, you're not seeing things (all that stuff about the bishop-pair in open positions is not applicable!).

8 g4 ♖g7 9 exd6 a6

Dreaming of compensation, Black sacrifices a pawn. The reality, however, is that a recapture on d6 would merely leave him with an extremely duff pawn and the comparison between Black's 'fianchettoed' g7-knight and White's own horse (about to take residence up on d5) saying it all.

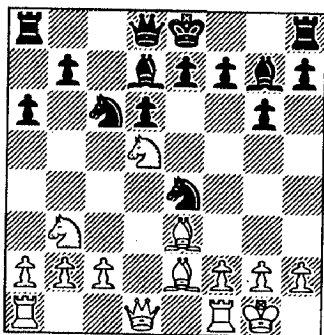
10 ♙xc6+ bxc6 11 dxe7 ♗xe7+ 12 ♙e3 c5 13 ♗c4 ♗b7 14 0-0-0 ♙e6 15 ♗a4+ 1-0

Effectively White just has a Classical variation with a couple of misplaced pieces. Black now continues very sensibly and only grabs the e4-pawn when sure that the coast is clear.

9...a6 10 ♙e2?

White should accept that his opening has been a bit of a failure and settle for 10 ♙d3.

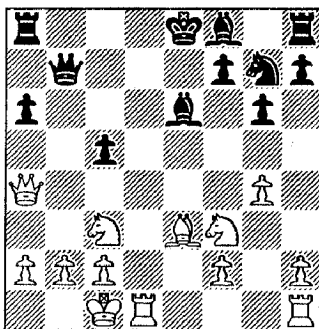
10...♖xe4! 11 ♙e3



Homing in on Black's only evident weak point, b6. However it is not enough.

11...0-0 12 ♙b6 ♗c8 13 ♙d4 ♙xd4

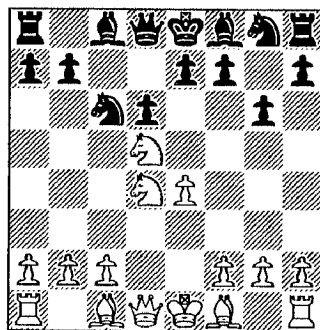
Obviously not 13...♖xd4?? 14 ♖xe7+.



♙c4 is also a Dragon deterrent as then after 6...g6? the nightmare scenario is 7 ♖xc6 bxc6 8 e5 dxe5?? (obviously not best but there is no good response) 9 ♙xf7+ when Black must wave goodbye to his queen.

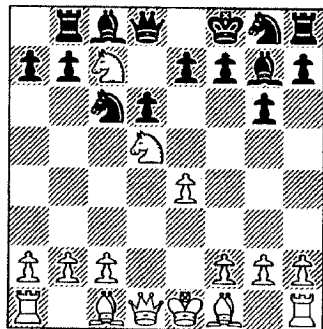
I must reiterate that this is a sneaky move order. Make sure that you are on the ball.

6 ♖d5



Another tricky move which should not however elicit panic. Black mustn't now overrate the threatened (and forthcoming) ♖b5 idea as that in itself could be potentially disastrous. Here, for example, 6...♙d7 7 ♖b5 ♙c8 is playable but 6...a6? drastically weakens the b6-square. Then 7 ♙e3, offering up 8 ♖xc6 and 9 ♙b6, is extremely worrying.

6...♙g7 7 ♖b5 ♙b8 8 ♖bc7+ ♗f8

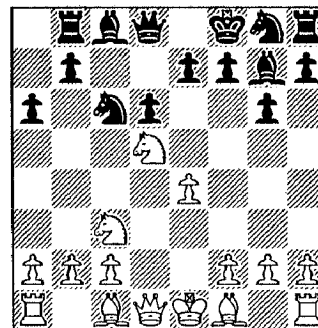


The white knights have infiltrated Black's position to try and cause damage (i.e. forcing the black king to move before it would have wanted to) but now they must hurry out to prevent damage (i.e. to avoid being trapped behind enemy lines).

9 ♖b5

As just mentioned (in a round-about way!), necessary to stop...e6.

9...a6 10 ♖bc3



10...b5

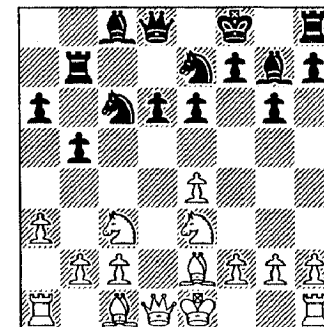
In *WSTD* I mentioned the most satisfactory 10...e6 11 ♖f4 b5 12 a3 ♙b7 13 ♙d3 ♖f6 14 0-0 ♗e7 15 ♖h3 ♙e8 16 f4 ♗f8 17 ♗e1 ♗g8 18 ♖h1 ♖g4 19 ♙d2 f5 20 exf5 exf5 21 ♗g3 d5 22 ♙ael ♗d7 23 ♖g5 ♖f6 24 ♗h3 d4 25 ♖d1 ♙bd8 26 a4 h6 27 axb5 axb5 28 ♖f3 ♗d5 29 ♗g1 ♖e4 30 ♙e2 ♙e6 31 ♙fe1 ♙de8 32 ♙c1 h5 33 ♖f2 ♙f6 34 ♖xe4 fxe4 35 ♖d2 e3 36 ♖f3 ♙g7 37 f5 ♙f6 38 fxg6 ♙ef8 39 ♙f1 ♖e5 40 ♙eel ♖xf3+ 0-1 of R.Bellin-A.Miles, Torquay 1982 As variety is the spice of life, though, I've proffered the text as an alternative way of playing for Black.

11 a3 e6 12 ♖e3

Black may not be able to castle but White is hardly deriving maximum benefit from this as, instead of developing, a massive 75% of White's moves have been with his

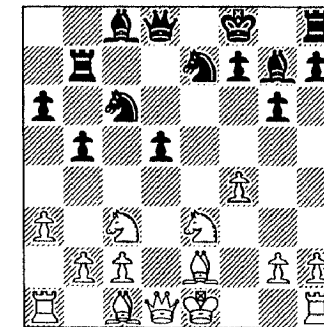
knights (the rest being with the pawns).

12...♖ge7 13 ♙e2 ♙b7!?



A fascinating manoeuvre in an unusual position. The point behind this move lies in the fact that not only is the d-pawn Black's only real weakness but the best way to exploit the awkwardly placed white knights is to advance it.

14 f4 d5! 15 exd5 exd5



16 ♖cxd5

Asking for trouble although it's fair to say that with the forking 15...d4 threatened there were no great retreat squares available for the knight.

16...♙d7

Needless to say the reasoning behind 13...♙b7!?

17 e4 bxc4 18 ♗a4 ♙xd5

Upon 15...♙d7 decisive is 16 ♙xd7 ♗xd7 17 ♗e4+.

Game 5

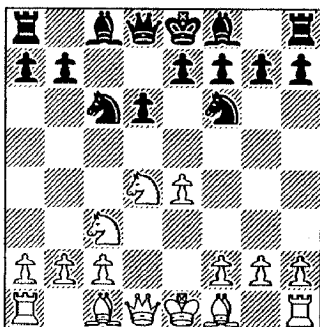
J.Barle White

D.Velimirović Black

Yugoslav Championship 1975

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 ♖c3 ♖c6 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♖xd4 g6

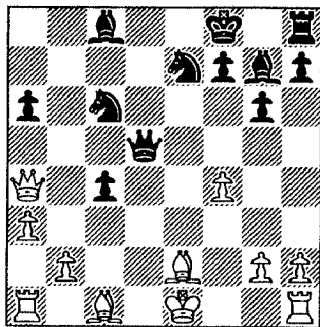
What really should be noted is that while 5...♖f6 isn't actually a mistake, it is a direct transposition into a 'Classical Sicilian'.



Although here 6 ♙e2 g6 would enter the realms of a Classical Dragon, there are a couple of natural White alternatives that would throw a spanner in Black's works. Firstly, 6 ♙g5 (a Richter-Rauzer) would halt 6...g6?! because of the structurally shattering 7 ♙xf6. Secondly, with more subtlety, 6

18...♖xd5 19 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 20 ♗xc6 wouldn't be so bad for White but Black was never going to pass up the opportunity to net two minor pieces for a rook.

19 ♖xd5 ♗xd5



There is a certain irony in this whole system. White has won the a8-rook, but gone are his knights!

20 0-0 ♗d4+ 21 ♖h1 c3 22 b4 ♖f6 23 ♖xa6 ♖g7 24 ♖xc8 ♗xc8 25 ♗c2 ♖f5 26 g4 ♗c4 27 ♖e1 ♖cd4 28 ♗e4 ♖d6 29 ♗g2 ♖b3 30 f5 ♖d4 31 ♗a2 c2 0-1

Finally, there is just one other move-order that I would like to discuss, nicely bridging the gap between the Open Sicilian Dragon and the Anti-Sicilians of chapter 12.

Game 6

C.Wessels White

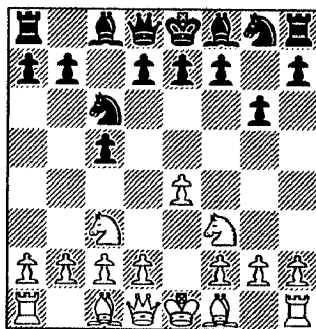
C.Ward Black

Guernsey Open 1991

1 e4 c5 2 ♖c3 ♖c6 3 ♖f3 g6

Though the most obvious-looking continuation for a Dragon player, in fact 3...d6 is also on the menu. Transposing to the previous game after 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♖xd4, Black's 3rd move, releasing the c8-bishop, might appeal more to a minority, phased by a forthcoming 4 h4 or

annoyed by the prospect of 4 ♖b5. At the end of the day it's all down to a matter of taste.



4 h4

An interesting move that should not however have Black quaking in his boots. Not that a Dragon player is keen to avoid it, but it's worth noting that after 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♖xd4 ♖g7 6 ♖e3 ♖f6, White cannot obtain a satisfactory Yugoslav Attack with 7 f3 0-0 8 ♗d2 as Black can take advantage of the fact that he hasn't yet moved his d-pawn by playing 8...d5!. Although, unlike in *WWTD*, 9...d5 is not covered extensively in the 9 0-0-0 Yugoslav Attack chapter this time, it is clear here that Black must be doing well as he is a full tempo up (i.e. White has not yet castled).

4...h5

Far from being the only continuation, this game merely highlights certain principles and points made in the previous two chapters.

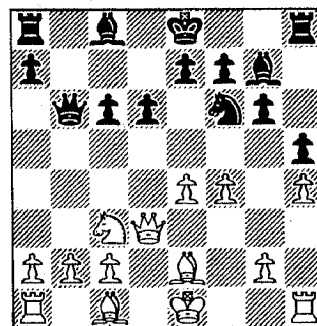
5 d4 cxd4 6 ♖xd4 ♖g7 7 ♖xc6?!

Throughout this book you will notice that I am frequently quick to criticise this move (I don't want you to forget!). White donates Black a handy half-open b-file, control over the d-square and hence a future possibility to set up a rock (i.e. a pawn) there himself.

7...bxc6 8 ♖e2 d6 9 f4

A comparison of weakened squares (as a result of 4 h4 h5 and now 9 f4) is that g4 is an outpost and White is planning to concede another one on e5 by advancing his f-pawn further. His idea is to pressurise the admittedly now less protected black pawn on g6.

9...♖f6 10 ♗d3 ♗b6!

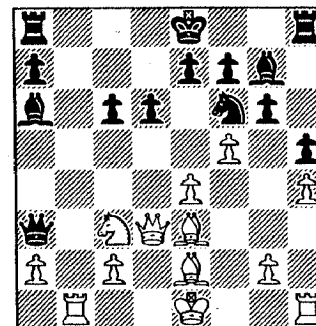


Preventing White from castling short and theoretically tying White's dark-squared bishop down to his b-pawn.

11 ♖e3

Played anyway, as White obviously didn't like the idea of the passive 11 ♗b1 which would also have ruled out his king from ever migrating to the queenside. Note after 11 b3 ♖xe4! there would have been no real chance of trapping the Dragon bishop with 12 ♖xe4 ♖xa1 13 c3, because of 13...♖f5.

11...♗xb2 12 ♗b1 ♗a3 13 f5 ♖a6!



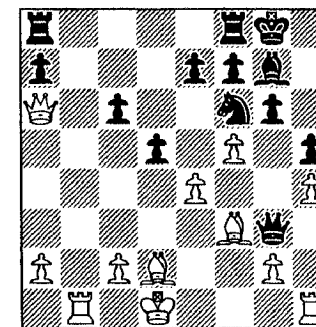
14 ♗xa6 ♗xc3+ 15 ♖d2

15 ♖f2 ♖xe4+ 16 ♖f3 ♖d2+ nets even more material.

15...♗g3+ 16 ♖d1 0-0

Black has all he wants and a pawn!

17 ♖f3 d5

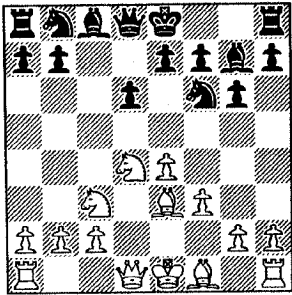


18 ♗xc6 ♗ac8 19 ♗a4 dxe4 0-1

Here my opponent resigned upon noticing that 20 ♖xe4 wasn't possible because of 20...♗g4+.

4 Yugoslav Attack: Introduction

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 g6 6 ♖e3 ♗g7 7 f3

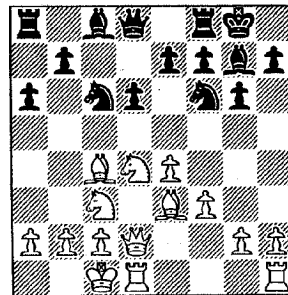


Getting straight to the heart of the matter, the ‘Yugoslav Attack’ is quite simply the most aggressive set-up that White can adopt against the Sicilian Dragon. White places his dark-squared bishop on e3 where it helps support the centre (specifically the d4-knight) and then follows up with the pawn push f2-f3. Seen above, this pawn move bolsters its compatriot on e4 while preventing Black from hassling his important dark-squared bishop with a future, possibly awkward, ...♗g4. Indeed, Black’s light-squared bishop is also prevented from using this square, whereas White now has possibilities of a timely offensive with g2-g4.

Certainly h4-h5 is in White’s mind to crack open the h-file in order to get at the enemy monarch, usually after he has bedded in his

own king on the queenside. Speaking purely in terms of White’s attack, his queen generally tends to approach the black king via the basic manoeuvre of ♖d2 and ♖h6 and, when the black f6-knight is the last line of defence, he has moves such as ♗d5 or g4-g5 to try and eliminate it. In fact, come to think of it, both of these appear in the following hypothetical game which is a good example of how the more naïve White players really believe that they can ‘crush’ the Dragon. Don’t let it happen to you!

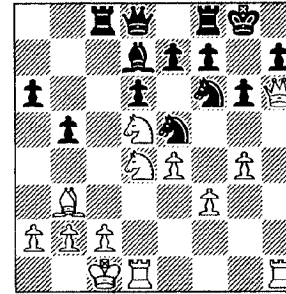
1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 g6 6 ♖e3 ♗g7 7 f3 ♗c6 8 ♖d2 0-0 9 ♖c4 ♗d7 10 0-0-0 a6?



As the pawns around White’s king are at home a black pawn storm will be significantly slower than an equivalent one by White. Instead he must attack with pieces

(something he runs out of time to do).

11 h4 b5 12 ♖b3 ♗e5 13 h5 ♗xh5 14 g4 ♗f6 15 ♖h6 ♖c8 16 ♖xg7 ♗xg7 17 ♖h6+ ♗g8 18 ♗d5



18...♖e8

Sure, 19 ♗xf6+ could happen anyway but the text is the only way to give the black king some breathing space.

19 g5! ♗h5 20 ♖xh5! gxh5 21 ♗f6+!

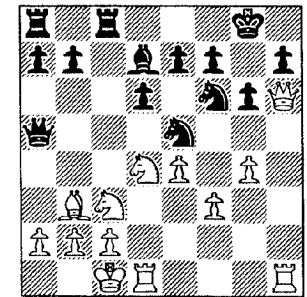
The legendary Bobby Fischer once described beating the Dragon as a simple case of “prying open the h-file and then sac, sac, mate!”. You’ve probably guessed by the fact that I’ve written this book at all that I don’t quite see it that way. However, I must concede that in this particular instance his description isn’t far off!

21...exf6 22 gxf6 1-0

Okay, I have seen White win the odd game like this (not against me I hasten to add!) but such things certainly shouldn’t happen to the well-prepared. However, even if you are already well-versed in Dragon theory (or have only begun reading this chapter after digesting the next three) this sort of thing is a reminder that in this cut throat system, time is of the essence!

The next encounter, which I also included in *WSTD* shows Black playing in a far more acceptable manner. Without faffing around with his queenside pawns, he gets straight to the point by attacking with his pieces. As a youngster I recall enjoying John Walker’s excellent books *Chess for Juniors* and *Attacking the King*. Indeed, it was in one of these that I first saw something like the next game. For me it was the Dragon in its rawest form with both sides going hell for leather at the enemy king with no time to lose. I certainly profited from this instructive encounter on numerous occasions as club players continued to follow White’s direct approach.

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 g6 6 ♖e3 ♗g7 7 f3 ♗c6 8 ♖d2 0-0 9 ♖c4 ♗d7 10 0-0-0 ♖a5 11 ♖b3 ♖fc8 12 h4 ♗e5 13 h5 ♗xh5 14 g4 ♗f6 15 ♖h6 ♖xh6



16...♖xc3!

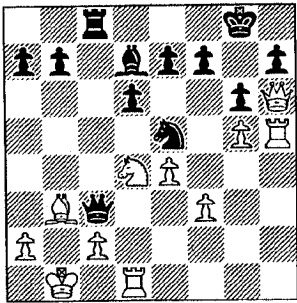
The thematic sacrifice that was seen aplenty in my last book and will be seen even more here. White eliminates the f6-knight eliminator! i.e. ♗d5 is stopped forever (or at least until the other white knight can manoeuvre itself there!).

17 bxc3 ♖xc3

Threatening 18...♖a1+ 19 ♔d2 ♗xd4. All of a sudden White struggles to negotiate the h7-pawn and Black has the initiative.

18 ♖b1 ♜c8 19 g5

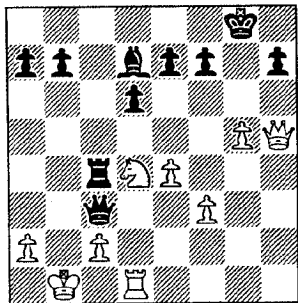
You will read more later about the 'positional' exchange sacrifice and how Black copes with the end-games. For now, though, watch White try to smash his way through.

19...♗h5 20 ♜xh5

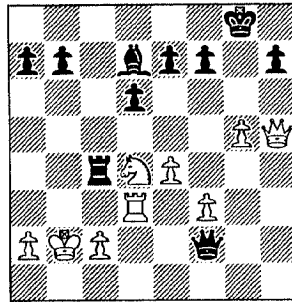
The predictable move that Yugoslav Attack players just love to whip out. Unfortunately for White, he has insufficient time to line up a second rook with his queen on the h-file.

20...gxf5 21 ♗xh5 ♕c4

Now mate is threatened on b2, thus forcing White to part with the remaining flimsy cover of his king.

22 ♕xc4 ♜xc4**23 ♜d3**

Just like the traditional Dragon bishop, after 23 ♜h1 ♗xd4 24 ♗xh7+ ♔f8 it is the centrally dominant black queen that both attacks and defends. That said, White no doubt realises that with the text he has abandoned his own attack and is throwing himself at Black's mercy. Needless to say he has entered the wrong opening to find such an obliging opponent!

23...♗e1+ 24 ♖b2 ♗f2

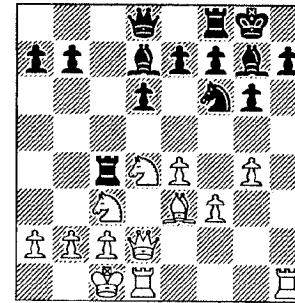
Simultaneously hitting the knight and the c2-pawn. There is no adequate defence.

25 g6 hxg6 26 ♗d5 ♕e6 27 ♗xc6 ♗xc2+ 28 ♖a3 ♜a4 mate.

The following game also had a big influence on my junior Dragon years. Doing the mathematics now I'm not quite sure why that was. I guess it just took a while before I got to see it. Crumbs, just think how much better I could be now if I'd had the benefit of *ChessBase* or *The Week in Chess* back then!? Oh well, anyway the point is that White demonstrates significantly more subtlety and the alarm bells begin to ring again.

A.Karpov White
V.Korchnoi Black
World Championship,
Moscow 1974

1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♕c3 g6 6 ♕e3 ♕g7 7 f3 ♗c6 8 ♗d2 0-0 9 ♕c4 ♕d7 10 h4 ♜c8 11 ♕b3 ♗e5 12 0-0-0 ♗c4 13 ♕xc4 ♜xc4 14 h5 ♗xh5 15 g4 ♗f6

**16 ♗de2**

Although, these days, this move, theoretically, is no great shakes, after being played here it was immediately regarded as a crunching innovation. It is logical in that White removes his knight (often vulnerable to tactics such as ...♗xe4) to a location where it both supports its partner on c3 and makes possible both ♗g3 (say after g4-g5 provoking ...♗h5) or ♗f4(-d5).

16...♗a5

A natural progression but in fact 16...♜c8!, anticipating 17 ♕h6, is considered to be stronger.

17 ♕h6 ♕xh6?!

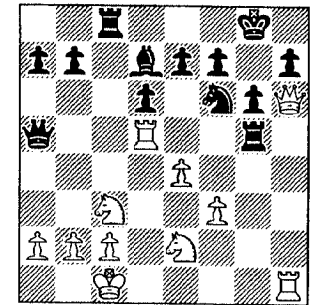
As White is so secure on the queenside, Black cannot afford to encourage an all-out attacking race. Instead the exchange sacrifice 17...♕h8!? is quite playable.

18 ♗xh6 ♜fc8 19 ♜d3!

Demonstrating that White is very aware of Black's sacrificial ideas on c3. 19 ♗d5? was not possible because of 19...♜xc2+ 20 ♖b1 ♗b5! but this remains a possibility, while a potential manoeuvre of the other knight to d5 is also worrying.

19...♜c2 20 g5!

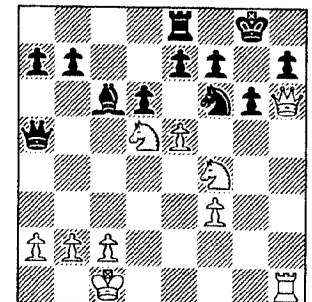
Luring one rook off the c-file. Now 20...♗h5 would walk into 21 ♗f4.

20...♜g5 21 ♜d5!

Guaranteeing that a white knight makes it to d5 as any ...♗xd5 would be flattened by ♗xh7-h8 mate.

21...♜xd5 22 ♗xd5 ♜e8

Black had to protect this pawn and had no time for the not particularly scary ...♗xa2.

23 ♗ef4 ♕c6 24 e5!

Relentless. White is not going to allow the black king to wriggle out on e7.

24...♙xd5

24...dxe5 25 ♖xf6+ exf6 26 ♘h5 is an unstoppable mate.

25 exf6 exf6 26 ♜xh7+ ♔f8 27 ♜h8+ 1-0

Upon 27...♗e7, it is 28 ♘xd5+ ♜xd5 29 ♜e1+ that seals Black's fate.

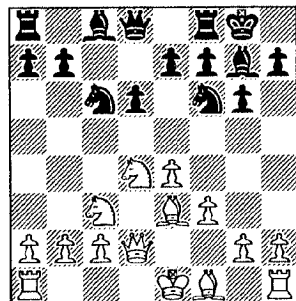
There can be no doubt that at the time this was a brilliant performance and, though it is of little theoretical interest these days, one can still admire its purity. I soon came to realise that this variation wasn't that relevant to me and in the next chapter you can read of my delight in refuting an attempt to railroad me into playing it.

Though so far I have talked of fast and furious chess, do or die stuff, nerves of steel etc. it would be too simplistic by far to look at the Yugoslav Attack as only a kingside vs queenside battle. Indeed, White often chooses to trade off queens early, after which Black is advised to just defend and take whatever material is offered. Following on from this, Black sometimes sacrifices pieces for pawns in order to build up an astonishing majority for the endgame ahead.

Moreover, in all this, one must not overlook the centre. The maxim "A flank attack is best met by a reaction in the centre" always makes me smile as I envisage someone being mated while dominating the middle of the board! A rather facetious viewpoint as, in reality, it is extremely difficult to conduct a successful raid on an enemy castled king without some sort of foothold

in the key central area. What I'm saying is that both sides must be careful to keep track of what is going on in the centre and Black, in particular, should be ready to strike out there if the opponent takes his eye off the ball.

Take, for example, the point in the Yugoslav Attack where the main diversions take place.



I wouldn't exactly call it a talent but for some reason I'm often able to predict how lower-rated 'hackers' will treat positions. No doubt somewhere on this planet a White optimist would be thinking something along the lines of:

"I want to give checkmate down the h-file and I don't need to bother castling queenside as the h1-rook will be more than adequate. However I can't get my queen near the black king with ♙h6 until the situation of my d4-knight is resolved"

The conclusion may be 9 ♖xc6?! bxc6 10 ♙h6 with the blatant intention of h4-h5. Forward planning perhaps, but only taking into account White's moves and significantly underestimating Black's chances. For starters, with the b7-pawn transferred to c6, Black will have a firm grip on the often so vital d5-square. Indeed, ♘d5 is ruled out for White when it comes

to the critical matter of having to remove Black's f6-knight and, besides, it is doubtful that White's attack will even get that far. His opponent can now utilise the b-file: ...♞b8 in conjunction with ...♜a5 will leave sacrifices more likely on b2 than anywhere near Black's king.

Returning to the above position, White, to move, must also be aware that, given the opportunity, Black is likely to open up the centre and expose White's pieces with ...d5 (note, with the e4-pawn gone, f2-f3 generally appears detrimental as there is a gaping hole or a loose bishop on e3).

Indeed, after the premature 9 h4?!, the perfect recipe is 9...d5! when exchanges in the middle will make it impossible for White to mount a serious attack. It is in fact very likely that any kingside pawn advances will then be seen as weaknesses created.

The next portion of this book deals with:

9 ♙c4 Chapter 5 sees White's light-squared bishop take up an active post where it both halts 9...d5 and prevents Black from activating his bishop along the e6-a2 diagonal.

9 g4 Chapter 6 features the aggressive pawn advance that has the advantage over 9 h4?! of introducing a g4-g5 recipe to fend off ...d5. Yes, Black needs his knight on f6 to support such a central break.

9 0-0-0 Chapter 7 covers the move that neither halts ...d5 or prevents Black taking control of the e6-a2 diagonal. Nevertheless, being non-committal, it is arguably the most natural continuation.

Before moving on I'd just like to supply the reader with the following travesty of justice. The opening variation is the only one, not

covered in the next three chapters, that I consider worthy of a mention.

By the way, please bear in mind that Copenhagen is the one 'holiday' tournament that I allow myself each year. As you will discover, for reasons that I don't really feel the need to divulge, my concentration isn't always up to scratch!

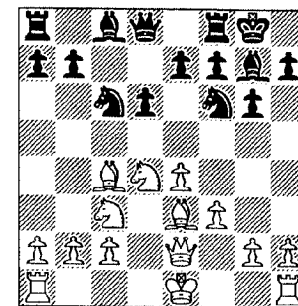
J.Sylvan White

C.Ward Black

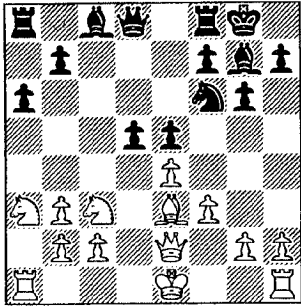
Politiken Cup, Copenhagen 1997

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♙e3 ♙g7 7 ♘c6 8 ♙c4 0-0 9 ♜e2

I never did understand this system (depicted below) for White even though it did once achieve a sustained period of popularity. Although White signals his intention not to part with the c4-square cheaply, attacking will be slower as ♙h6 is not on the menu. In fact the first player plans a positional approach.

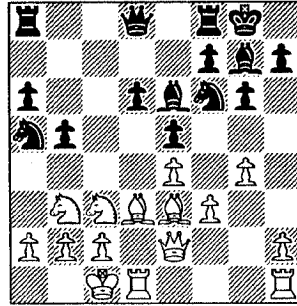


Along the same lines (i.e. with the queen going to e2) but with the alternative bishop retreat, another of my own encounters saw: 9 ♙b3 ♘a5 10 ♜e2 e5! (an ugly move if the d-pawn remains backward but of course it doesn't for long). 11 ♘db5 a6 12 ♘a3 ♘xb3 13 axb3 d5



(seen above) of J.Hector-C.Ward, (Yes me again!) Copenhagen 1998, in which Black had emerged from the opening with a nice edge.

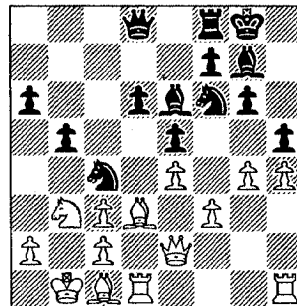
11...b5 12 g4 e5 13 Qb3 Qe6



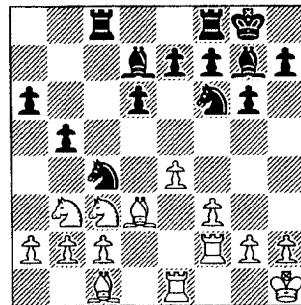
14 h4 Nc8 15 Qb1 Nxc3!? 16 bxc3 Qc4 17 Qc1

Black of course didn't have to sacrifice the exchange, just as White doesn't have to preserve this bishop. However, without it, White knows that he won't easily be able to negotiate the Dragon bishop in his quest to deliver mate.

17...h5!



Black tries to encourage 18 g5 when the kingside will be sealed (White would hardly want to free the Dragon bishop with f4).



14 Qg5 d4 15 Qd5 Qe6 16 Qxf6 Qxf6 17 Qxf6+ Wxf6 18 Qc4 Nac8 19 0-0 Nc6 20 Nfc1 Nfc8 (Black stands structurally better and ultimately the pressure on White's c-pawn proves decisive.) 21 Qa5 N6c7 22 Wd2 Wf4 23 Wxf4 exf4 24 c3 b5 25 c4 bxc4 26 bxc4 Qxc4 27 Nxc4 Nxc4 28 Qxc4 Nxc4 29 Nxa6 Nc1+ 30 Qf2 Nc2+ 31 Qf1 Nxb2 32 Nd6 Nd2 33 Nf6 d3 34 Nxf4 Na2 35 Qc1 Nc2+ 36 Qd1 Nxc2 37 h4 Qg7 38 e5 Nc2 39 Nd4 Nxc5 40 Nxd3 Nf5 41 Qe2 Nf4 42 h5 g5 43 Nd5 Qh6 0-1 H. El Kher-C.Ward, Copenhagen 1998.

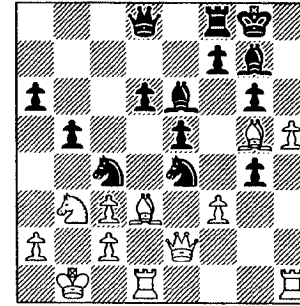
9...Qa5 10 Qd3 a6 11 0-0-0

Less ambitious was the 11 0-0 Qd7 12 Wf2 Wc8 13 Nae1 Qc4 14

Qc1 Wc5 15 Qh1 Nac8 16 Qb3 Wxf2 17 Nxf2 b5

Meanwhile the f6-knight could relocate to assist in queenside action. Black also foresees White's next sequence and has a surprise in store.

18 Qg5 hgx4 19 h5 Qxe4!!

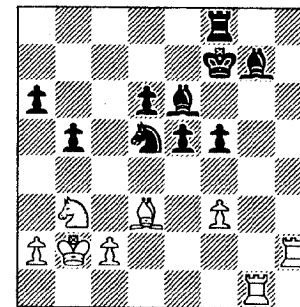


Because of White's last aggressive advance his bishop is no longer protected.

20 Qxe4

20 Qxd8 Qxc3+ 21 Qa1 (Upon 21 Qc1 Black could grab the a2-pawn with check and, faced with the same position, throw in a check on h6 before taking the white queen.) 21...Qxe2 22 Qxe2 e4+ 23 Qb1 Qa3+ 24 Qc1 exf3 is excellent for Black.

20...Wxg5 21 hgx6 f5 22 Wb2 Wxg6 23 Qd3 g3 24 Ndg1 gxh2 25 Nxc6 Qf7 26 Ng2 Qe3 27 Nxc6 Qd5 28 Ng1 Qxc3+ 29 Qb2 Qd5



For his extra exchange White is two pawns down, while his remaining three pawns are all weak.

30 Qc1 N8 31 Nhg2 Qf6 32 Qa5 Qb4 33 Qb7 Qe7 34 Ng6 Qf7 35 Qxd6 Nxc6 36 Nxc6 Qxd3+ 37 cxd3 Qe6 38 Qc2 Nd8 39 Qb7 Nc8+ 40 Qb3 Nc7 1-0

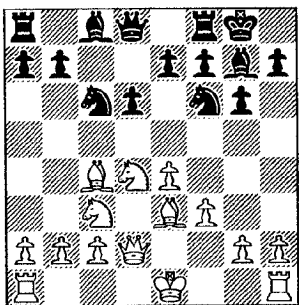
Now, unbelievably, it was pointed out to me that my flag had dropped. Don't ask how on earth that could have happened without my realizing I was even in time trouble, but it did! After an otherwise very satisfying performance, leading to this completely winning position, nothing less than a disaster!

Contrary to popular belief the Dragon (even in the Yugoslav Attack) isn't only about tactics and learning reams and reams of theory. However it is true that there are often many forcing lines and it is not uncommon to see old ones being busted and new ones emerging. There is so much room for manoeuvre, though, and while it can't hurt to be a theory buff, there is also something immensely satisfying about developing your own innovations and refuting refutations!

It is dangerous to accept other peoples' assessments as gospel, whatever the source, and one should view games and annotations with an open mind. Yes, it's possible (if highly unlikely!) that you may not agree with the occasional line given in this book. However there are plenty of alternatives to be found elsewhere and I still believe that the most important thing is to digest the themes and principles. With those in your armoury, simply engage the brain, make the chessboard your canvas and, of course, don't lose on time!

5 Yugoslav Attack 9 ♘c4

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4
 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 g6 6 ♘e3 ♘g7 7
 ♖3 0-0 8 ♗d2 ♗c6 9 ♘c4



With his ninth move White develops the light-squared bishop to its most natural square where it immediately puts a stop to any Black ideas of a quick ...d5. The only reason why I feel obliged to explain 9 ♘c4 at all is that many people query the expenditure of two tempi on this bishop (i.e. including the inevitable retreat to b3) when they consider it 'destined' to be traded anyway for a black knight on c4. The answer is that one must credit Black with more common sense and realise that a Dragon player will obviously not be in such a hurry to employ the ...♗e5-c4 manoeuvre while the bishop languishes on f1. Black will play ...d5, if allowed, and should White not take control of the b3-f7 diagonal himself, then Black could easily opt to utilize it for his own light-squared bishop.

With the text move, White is now given the option of castling either side. However, although sliding it to the kingside and indeed leaving it in the centre, were both briefly covered in WWTD, the fact is that White ought to be writing '0-0-0' on his score-sheet at some future point.

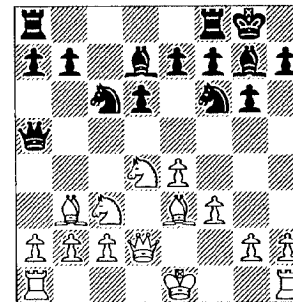
As there are a variety of systems available to Black after 9 ♘c4, for some time this has been considered as the really 'macho' continuation. This is because, generally, the positions reached are more attacking and also White must be prepared to face a wider range of responses than are available after 9 0-0-0 or 9 g4. You will read at the end of the chapter why this latter point hasn't been such a big problem in more recent times, but for now just prepare to be thrilled!

I have dabbled in most of Black's set-ups after 9 ♘c4 at some time in my life and the main ones still appear to me to be eminently playable. Still my own personal favourite, though, I have concentrated on ...♗a5 lines here. I still stand by the vast majority of variations given in WWTD and have tried to maintain a repertoire here, while introducing some fresh ideas.

Games 1 and 2 are revisited annotations from my previous book. This first one I have retained because... well I like it! (Oh and I don't want my old chum Phil forgetting it!).

Game 1
 P.Morris White
 C.Ward Black
 Lloyds Bank U-16, 1983

1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4
 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 g6 6 ♘e3 ♘g7 7
 ♖3 0-0 8 ♗d2 ♗c6 9 ♘c4 ♘d7 10
 ♘b3 ♗a5



Characterising the main variation for Black that I'm recommending in this book. The black queen swings into action, simultaneously connecting the two rooks. Rightly choosing to attack with pieces rather than pawns, I consider this to be Black's most dynamic continuation. Essentially he is showing White that he too means business. There are risks involved with this move but isn't it better to burn out than fade away?

11 h4 ♖fc8 12 h5

There is little doubt that the fastest route to the black king is down the h-file and in order to activate his rook White is happy to sacrifice a pawn.

12...♗xh5

"Thank you very much!" is Black's attitude. It is true that this apparent greed accelerates White's attack but bagging a pawn has its plus points. Black keeps the three-pawn shell intact around his king, while reducing the material deficit

in the not unlikely event of his sacrificing the exchange on c3.

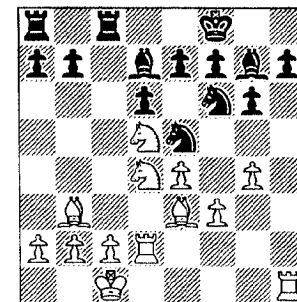
13 0-0-0 ♗e5

In my comments to White's next move you will read about, arguably, the most annoying continuation (from Black's point of view) available to White. Game 3 introduces a new approach to avoid it, although it has occurred to me that the white move-order played here would bring it back into contention. Don't worry, all will soon be clear to you but although I am still chuffed about this old game of mine, it should be observed that 13...♗xd4 14 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 15 ♗xd4 ♖xc3 doesn't look ridiculous while 13...♗g3, first, may also be good.

14 ♗de2

With this move my good friend Phil Morris was attempting to trick me into transposing into the famous 1974 Karpov-Korchnoi World Championship tussle described in Chapter 4.

Instead of the text, this would be a good point to discuss 14 ♗d5, although it is hardly in the spirit of things. Yes, the queens must take an early bath and diversions start after 14...♗xd2+ 15 ♖xd2 ♗f8 16 g4 ♗f6.

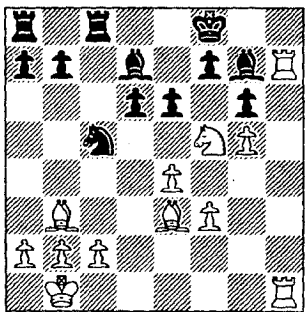


From here:

a) 17 ♖h6 is no problem and in fact 17...♗xh6 18 ♖xh6 ♘xd5 19 ♖xd5 ♗g7 20 ♖dh2 ♖h8 21 ♖xb7 ♖ab8 22 ♖d5 ♖b4 23 c3 ♖xd4 24 cxd4 ♘xf3 is very nice for Black.

b) 17 ♘xf6 ♖xf6 18 ♖dh2 ♘c4 19 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 20 ♖xh7 ♖ac8 is also fine, e.g. 21 c3 b5 22 ♘c2 a5 23 ♖d4 ♖xd4 24 ♘xd4 e5 25 ♘c2 ♖e6 26 ♖b1 ♖e7 as in I.Nataf-C.Ward, Paris-London match 1994.

c) 17 ♖dh2! is, in my opinion, White's most accurate move as, unlike in b), he doesn't have to concede his b3-bishop after 17...♘c4 since 18 ♖h6! is much stronger. In this line Black must take into serious consideration the perils of 17...e6 (Note 17...♘xd5 18 ♖xd5 ♘c6 19 ♘xc6 bxc6 20 ♖c4 is, as I discovered in a game against John Nunn, a little awkward for Black. Although at first he too held the opinion that the position was equal, in fact a closer inspection reveals that White has a straightforward plan while Black finds it difficult to drum up counterplay.) 18 ♘xf6 ♖xf6 19 ♖xh7 ♘d3?! 20 ♖b1 ♘c5 21 g5 ♖g7 22 ♘f5!

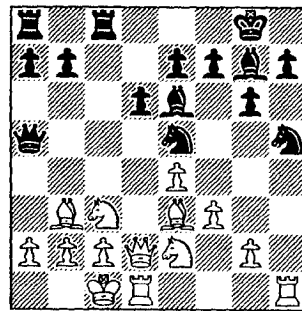


It is surprising how much danger there is to Black even without the queens on, but it is certainly true that 22...gxf5 23 exf5 exf5 24 ♖xg7

♘xb3 25 ♖hh7 ♖e6 26 g6 is a crushing attack.

To avoid this 19...a5 has been suggested as an improvement with 20 g5 ♖g7 21 a4 ♘d3+ 22 ♖b1 ♘c5 23 ♘f5 exf5 24 ♖xg7 ♘xb3 25 ♖hh7 ♖e6 26 exf5 ♖xf5 forcing White to take a draw by repetition due to the mate on c2. However it seems to me that 21 a3 is more worrying as then White can simply preserve his bishop on a2, thus retaining the ♘f5 threats. Probably there is a way for Black to nullify the danger but it's not that much fun and that's why I dreamt up a reasonably interesting way of avoiding this (see game 3).

14...♖e6



In playing this, instead of 14...♘c4, I deduced that there was no hurry to trade my knight for his light-squared bishop. Indeed, while it remains on e5, the f3-pawn is scrutinized, making g2-g4 very difficult for White to arrange.

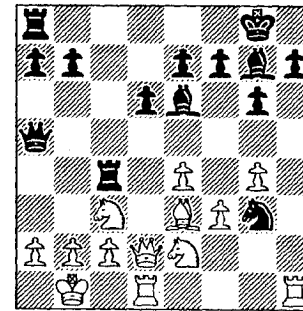
15 ♖b1

The threat was 15...♖xb3 when, depending on which pawn recaptures, Black would have 16...♖a1+ or 16...♖xa2. White didn't want to concede the c4-square with 15 ♖xe6 and hence the text.

15...♘c4

Played now because I sensed that I had amassed a very reasonable attacking armada.

16 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 17 g4 ♘g3!



The knight acts as a decoy while the real aggression comes from the queen, rook and two bishops!

18 ♘g3 ♖xc3!

18...♖xc3? 19 bxc3? ♖b4+ would lead to mate but 19 ♖h2 is possible.

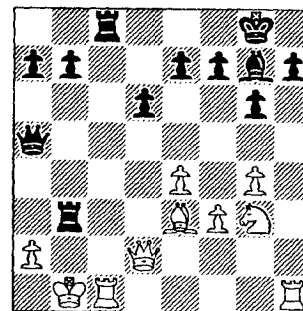
19 b3

Creating some unpleasant holes but certainly 19 a3 ♖xa3! 20 bxa3 ♖c3 was no better.

19...♖ac8 20 ♖c1

Halting the queen 'sacrifice' 20...♖xc2, but not preventing an alternative very effective tactic.

20...♖xb3! 21 cxb3 ♖xb3+ 0-1



Upon 22 axb3, mate comes with 22...♖a1.

The next game is also one that was covered in my first book on the Dragon. If you choose to adopt the interesting move-order proposed in game 3 then the specifics of this encounter will not be so relevant. However I believe it still serves as a good illustration of how to handle endgames resulting from the positional ...♖xc3 sacrifice and hence it too keeps its place.

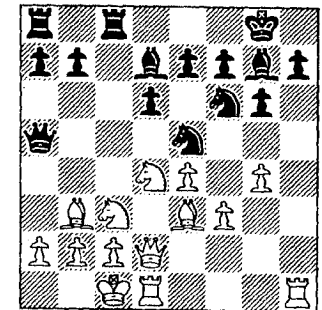
Game 2

D.Holmes White

C.Ward Black

Lloyds Bank Masters, London 1991

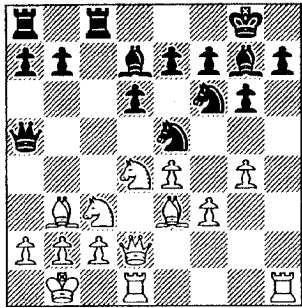
1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♖e3 ♖g7 7 f3 0-0 8 ♖d2 ♘c6 9 ♖c4 ♖d7 10 h4 ♖a5 11 h5 ♘e5 12 ♖b3 ♘xh5 13 0-0-0 ♖fc8 14 g4 ♘f6



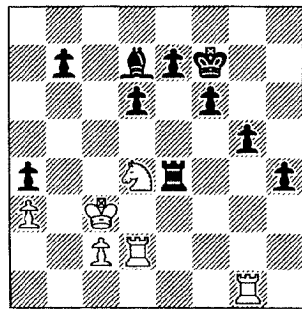
15 ♖h6

White has made his bed and now he must lie on it. Yes, he is committed to an attack and against 15 ♖h2 instead, Black is advised by theory to eradicate the threat of 16 ♘d5 with 15...e6!. Note this time White is intending to meet 15...♖xc3 with the sneaky pin, 16 ♖d2, although personally I'm not sure that he can avoid structural damage anyway. Indeed, then 16...♘d3+ 17 ♖b1 ♘xb2 18 ♖xb2 ♖ac8 doesn't look at all unreasonable.

The only other frequently tried move is 15 ♖b1



when 15...♞xc3!? 16 ♞xc3 ♞xc3 17 bxc3 ♞c8 is standard. From there one fun game saw 18 ♖b2 (or 18 ♖d2 a5 19 a4 ♘c4 20 ♖xc4 ♞xc4 21 ♘b3 b6 when the a-pawn dropped and Black won later in B.Gruzmann-J.Yoos, Budapest 1998.) 18...a5 19 a3 a4 20 ♖a2 ♘xf3 21 ♘xf3!? ♘e4 22 ♖d4 ♘xc3 23 ♞d2 ♘xa2 24 ♖xcg7 ♘xcg7 25 ♖xa2 ♖xcg4 26 ♘e1 h5 27 ♖b2 ♞c4 28 ♞d5 ♖d7 29 ♞g1 h4 30 ♞d2 f6 31 ♘f3 ♞f4 32 ♘d4 g5 33 ♖c3 ♖f7 34 ♘e2 ♞e4 35 ♘d4

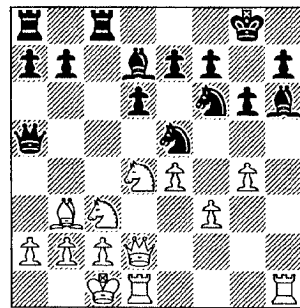


35...h3 36 ♖d3 ♞f4 37 ♖e3 e5 38 ♘e2 ♞h4 39 ♞h1 ♖c6 40 ♞h2 ♖e6 41 ♘g1 g4 42 ♖f2 ♞h7 43 ♖g3 f5 44 ♘h3 gxh3 45 ♞hx3 ♞g7+ 46 ♖h2 ♞g6 47 ♞g3 ♞h6+ 48 ♞h3 ♞f6 49 ♖g3 f4+ 50 ♖f2 ♞g6 51 ♞h2 e4

52 ♞d4 ♖e5 53 ♞b4 ♞g4 54 ♞h8 e3+ 55 ♖f1 0-1 B.Nepali-A.Khakpoor, Calcutta 1996. Although I loved those pawns, there is no compulsion for Black to effectively sacrifice a whole rook. For example 20...♖e8!? is a safe and simple continuation, paving the way for the f6-knight to get to c4 (via d7 and b6).

15...♖xh6

As mentioned in *WSTD* there is a certain amount of interest in 15...♞xc3 16 bxc3 ♘xf3 (possibly a forced draw!) but the text is very reliable.

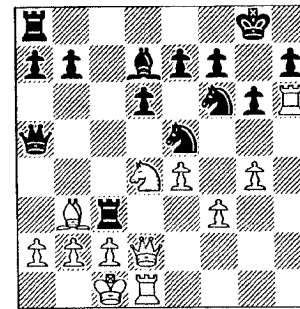


16 ♞xh6

Definitely White's best chance. 16 ♞xh6?! is route 1 and usually employed by the wet behind the ears Yugoslav Attack players. As explained in chapter 4, White may feel he is on the verge of winning with 17 ♘d5 but the following still seen encounter is not untypical: 16...♞xc3! 17 bxc3 (For what it's worth 17 g5 ♘h5 18 ♘f5 (invariably a desperado attempt!) 18...♖xf5 19 exf5 ♘d3+ 20 ♞xd3 ♞xd3 21 fxc6 ♞d2+ 0-1 was F.Tepper-M.Horvath, Bratislava 1993.) 17...♞xc3 18 ♘e2 ♞a1+ 19 ♘d2 ♘xf3+ 20 ♖e3 ♞xd1 21 g5 (I've had 21 ♞xd1 ♘xcg4+ 22 ♖xf3 ♘xh6 once or twice myself!)

21...♘g4+ 0-1 M.Malo Quiros-A.Hoffman, Ubeda Open 1997.

16...♞xc3



White's choice of rook over queen recapture on h6 doesn't look as threatening but we've seen why it is necessary for him to keep his queen near his king for the time being. Black's treatment is run of the mill stuff but he mustn't take White's plans too lightly. A trebling of major pieces on the h-file could be very dangerous.

17 ♞xc3

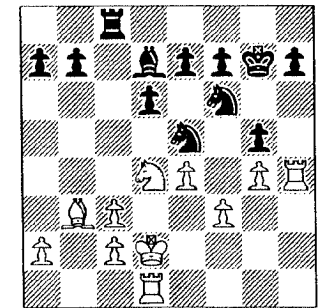
My experience in these sorts of positions is that more often than not White loses his bottle and wants the queens off ASAP. One can see why he might be worried but, for him to achieve anything on the h-file, the queens must remain. A junior I once coached knew his theory alright and after 17 bxc3 ♞c8 18 ♖b2 ♞b6 (Having played through these variations you will see why 18...♘c4+ 19 ♖xc4 ♞xc4 20 ♘b3 ♞e5 is an alternative way for Black to keep the game alive.) 19 ♖a1 (19 ♞h2! is more accurate as 19...♞c5 20 ♞xh7 ♞xc3+ 21 ♖b1 ♘xh7 22 ♞h1 e6 23 ♞xh7+ ♖f8 24 ♖h6+ ♖e7 25 ♞g5+ f6 26 ♞h7+ ♘f7 27 ♞xcg6 forces Black to take a perpetual.) 19...♞c5 20 ♖b2 a5 21 ♞dh1 a4 (or 21...e6, avoiding the complications

of what follows) 22 ♞xh7 ♘xh7 23 ♞h6 ♞xc3+ 24 ♖b1 e6 25 g5 ♘g4 26 ♞xh7+ ♖f8 27 fxc4 ♞xd4 he went on to win convincingly (V.Jensen-R.Cole, Aarhus 1994).

17...♞xc3 18 bxc3 ♞c8

18...♖g7 19 ♞h2 ♞c8 20 ♖b2 a5 21 a3 ♞c5 22 ♞f2 g5! 23 ♖a2 ♖g6 24 ♘b3 ♘c4+ 25 ♖c1 ♞c8 26 ♞d4 a4 27 ♘d2 ♘xa3 28 c4 b5 29 ♖b2 b4 was also good for Black in B.Beenish-O.Salmensuu, Calicut 1998. In the main game you will notice a similar theme of fixing the white kingside pawns.

19 ♖d2 ♖g7 20 ♞h4 g5!



The rook had to retreat to avoid the risk of being incarcerated but on its chosen square I guess Black is donated a tempo. That said, particularly with this ...g5 move thrown in, White finds it difficult to do anything constructive. I suppose he still has some control of the h-file but Black's knights stand firm and the desirable break f3-f4 is practically impossible to arrange.

21 ♞h2 ♞c5

When not much is going on this is often a solid flexible move. Remaining on the c-file, the rook now has options along the fourth rank.

22 ♞e1 e6

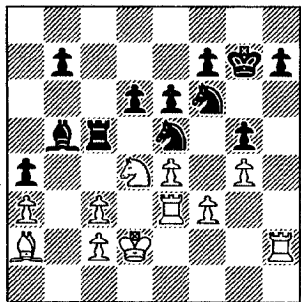
Another handy move that is good providing the d6-pawn isn't left too

exposed. Even if the white rooks make it to the d-file, White has trouble finding an alternative home for his d4-knight. Whilst supporting a possible ...d5 push, the text prevents a future ♖f5.

23 ♖e3 a5 24 a3

The position is slightly different from one that readers may obtain in their own games in that here White has opted to place his king on d2 rather than b2. Nevertheless the principle still applies that there is no rush for Black to trade his e5-knight for the b3-bishop and indeed he prefers to exploit the lack of flight squares available to it. The text provides a2 as a retreat and, in general, will be preferable to 24 a4 after which the a-pawn will be extremely weak when ...♖c4 (forcing ♖xc4) eventually comes.

24...a4 25 ♖a2 ♖b5!?



The plan is to secure the c4-square for a black knight by 26...♖c4. White simply can't allow that to happen.

26 ♖xb5 ♖xb5 27 ♖h1 ♖b2

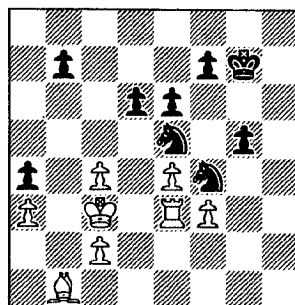
A big point I made in *WSTD*, and would like to reiterate, is applicable to all endgames and not just the Dragon. Black has been happy to sacrifice the exchange because of the lack of open files. In general when you are the exchange down

(just like when you have two pieces for a rook and a pawn or two) it is in your interest to preserve your remaining rook. Sure, theoretically, your opponent will have double the firepower along the files and ranks, pinned, skewered or deprived of squares for precisely those reasons. Your rook may be required to pick off weak enemy pawns and, more importantly, will be the best man for the job of halting an outside passed pawn (something which is preferably avoided). White placed his king on the d-file in the hope that he might be able to use the b-file for his rook. As you can see, it has not quite turned out that way!

28 ♖a1 h5!

With White now tied up on the queenside, Black now makes a break on the kingside.

29 gxf5 ♖xh5 30 e4 ♖f4 31 ♖c3 ♖b6 32 ♖b1 ♖xb1 33 ♖xb1



Now a white outside passed a-pawn could prove problematic for Black. Fortunately White's pieces are hardly in a position to create such a distraction!

33...♖g2 34 ♖e2 ♖h4 35 f4

If the f-pawn fell where it stood then Black's g-pawn would be even more troublesome.

35...gxf4 36 ♖h2 ♖hf3 37 ♖f2 ♖h6

The bishop looks very sad on b1 and the white king is cut off from returning to the kingside. Meanwhile the black monarch is on the move with penetration inevitable.

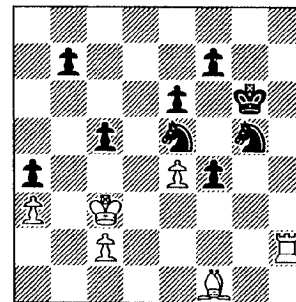
38 ♖a2 ♖h5 39 e5

White is desperate for some activity but of course the text involves dropping another pawn.

39...dxc5 40 ♖c4 ♖h4 41 ♖f1 ♖g5 42 ♖h2+

Amusingly, after 42 ♖xf4+ ♖g3, White loses his rook.

42...♖g4 43 ♖g2+ ♖h5 44 ♖h2+ ♖g6



The black king returns after a job well done. Now either the e-pawn will drop or the f-pawn will promote—in fact most likely both. The game doesn't last much longer.

45 ♖d3 f3 46 ♖h4 f2 47 ♖f1 ♖ef3 0-1

If, for example, 48 ♖f4, then 48...e5 would certainly spell the end.

Game 3

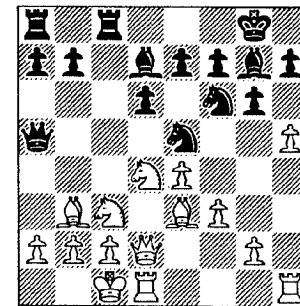
Y. Afek White

C. Ward Black

Oakham Masters 2000

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 g6 6 ♖e3 ♖g7 7

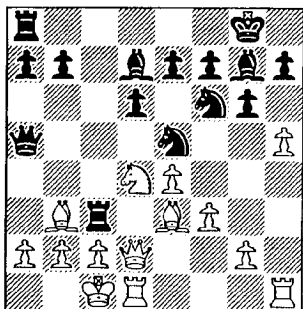
f3 ♖c6 8 ♖c4 0-0 9 ♖d2 ♖d7 10 0-0-0 ♖a5 11 ♖b3 ♖fc8 12 h4 ♖e5 13 h5



Rarely mentioned in textbooks but surprisingly popular with club players is instead 13 ♖h6. This wasn't playable when tension was still in the air over the d4-knight and so now may be the earliest opportunity for White to try and eliminate the Dragon bishop, while advancing the queen toward the enemy king.

White may well be aware of the traditional exchange sac on c3 after he has sacrificed his h-pawn. However, he may also be of the opinion that "Surely Black can't afford to give up a whole rook for a knight when he hasn't even got the h-pawn as compensation". A reasonable argument, but nevertheless wrong! 13...♖xh6 14 ♖xh6 ♖xc3! should follow when, after 15 bxc3, as well as 15...♖xc3 Black has 15...♖a3+!? followed by 16...a5. With Black intending ...a4, White's light-squared bishop is quickly embarrassed and you should note how important it is for White to retain some control of c4. If a black knight takes up residence there then life could be extremely painful and, while I'm on the subject, ...♖a6-b6 is hardly an inconsequential possibility either!

13...♖xc3!?



Or at least I think '!' is a fair assessment. What's for sure is that the knight won't be hopping into d5! Instead, 13...♗h5 14 ♖d5, transposes to the rather dull line I discussed in the last game. Yes, as previously mentioned, it is true that I was ground down in Nunn-Ward, Hastings Premier 1998, but the text puts paid to that whole idea.

What is ridiculous is that I had prepared this idea a few years back but, being surprised by John Nunn's choice, I completely forgot about it! I did however show it to a student of mine, Desmond Tan, for use only in the event of a big occasion. I was referring to tournaments such as the World Junior, but young Des obviously saw fit to whip it out against a GM in a 10 minute game at the 1999 Mind Sports Olympiad. Ordinarily I would have been the first to congratulate him on obtaining such a big scalp. However, as his victim was the same man I had been plotting revenge against (you've guessed it, none other than Doctor John Nunn), I wasn't so chuffed. Nevertheless, despite this victory, the specifics of the opening move-order passed without scrutiny and my prepared novelty was swept under the carpet until I had a chance to unleash it here.

14 bxc3

A while back the main two moves that I had looked at were:

a) 14 hxg6 ♖c5 when neither 15 gxf7+ nor 15 gxh7+ seemed to offer White enough for the piece and

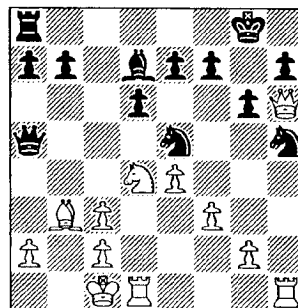
b) 14 h6 ♖c5 (Note 14...♗d3+?! 15 ♖b1 ♗xb2 16 ♗xb2 ♖xb3+ 17 cxb3 is favourable for White.) 15 ♖xa5 ♖xa5 16 hxg7 ♗xg7 (Maybe 16...h5 17 g4 ♗xg7 is more accurate.) 17 g4 h5 which is perhaps a critical variation. White has the two bishops and Black's rook is rather awkwardly placed. However, the second player has a solid structure and is of course a pawn up.

The two games that I have on my database with 13...♖xc3!? continued with 14 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 15 bxc3 ♗h5. Basically, I had just assumed that Black would be okay in this not untypical Dragon endgame and indeed 16 g4 ♗f6 17 g5 ♗h5 18 ♖de1 ♖c8 19 f4 ♗g4 20 ♖d2 e5 21 fxe5 ♖xe5 22 ♖hf1 ♖f8 23 ♖d5 ♗h2 24 ♖h1 b6 25 ♖eg1 ♗g4 26 ♗f5 ♗h2 27 ♗h6+ ♗g7 28 ♖e3 f6 29 gxf6+ ♗xf6 30 ♖g2 ♗xd5 31 exd5 ♗f1 32 ♖d4 ♖xd4 33 cxd4 ♗e3 34 ♖e2 ♗xd5 35 ♖d2 b5 36 a4 a6 37 axb5 axb5 38 ♖g2 ♖f4 39 c3 b4 40 cxb4 ♖xd4+ 41 ♖c1 ♖c4+ 42 ♖c2 ♖xc2+ 43 ♖xc2 ♗xb4+ 44 ♖d2 ♗c6 45 ♖e3 ♗e5 46 ♖f4 ♗d3+ 47 ♖g5 ♗f2 48 ♖h4 ♗h3+ 0-1 occurred in G.Staub-A.Habibi, Lugano 2000, while 16 ♖g5 ♗f6 17 ♖h6 was a quick draw in Y.Gruenfeld-J.Murey, Israel 1999.

14...♗h5 15 ♖h6

15 ♖g5 ♗f6 16 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 is always going to be risky for White, who will pick up the h7-pawn but have no attack without his dark-squared bishop. By contrast, the Dragon bishop will be superb at both attacking and defending.

15...♖xh6 16 ♖xh6



We have now transposed to what I think used to be, and I guess still is, known as the 'Karpov variation'.

16...♗f6!?

I had been expecting a 2 c3 Sicilian for this particular game and was somewhat surprised when my opponent played in this fashion. Contrary to popular belief I haven't memorized every line off by heart, although I no doubt looked at this variation when I was learning the Dragon as a junior. I could vaguely recall that this precautionary retreat was recommended by most old texts. Although it may look a bit odd, it removes ♖xh5 from White's menu and tries to encourage 17 g4! ♖xc3 18 ♖b1 ♖c8 etc. That of course has already been demonstrated as excellent for Black.

17 ♗e2?!

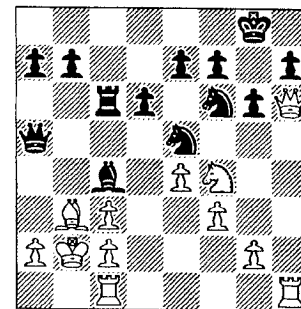
In the absence of White's other knight, the responsibility is placed upon this steed to try and remove Black's key defensive f6-knight. As well as doing a spot of defending, the white knight eyes up f4 and thereby ultimately d5. I was expecting this move but in fact it is probably premature. The fact that it doesn't seem to work indicates to me that things aren't going well for White. Nevertheless, after 17 ♖b1,

theory, as it stands, seems to suggest that he shouldn't lose either. After 17...♖c8 18 ♗e2 ♖b5, compared to our main game (although note firstly that 18...♗c4 is also possible with 19 ♖d5 ♖a3 20 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 21 e5 ♖c6 22 ♗d4 ♖b6+ 23 ♗b3 ♖f5 24 exf6 ♖xb3+ 25 axb3 ♖xb3+ 26 ♖a1 ♖xc3+ 27 ♖a2 ♖xc2+ 28 ♖a3 ♖c3+ 29 ♖a2 being another wacky line which should end in a perpetual) 19 ♗f4 ♖c4 20 ♗h3 ♖c6 21 ♗g5 ♖xb3 22 cxb3 ♖xc3 23 ♗xh7 ♖c2+ 24 ♖a1 ♖c3+ 25 ♖b1 ♖c2+ is a draw.

17...♖b5 18 ♗f4 ♖c4

And a fascinating situation has arisen. Neither bishop wants to capture the other as the result would be to donate a key square to the enemy knight.

19 ♖b2 ♖c8 20 ♖c1 ♖c6!?



21 g4

The black rook was preparing to swing into the attack and so White had to act quickly. 21 ♗h3 ♖a6! 22 a4 is much too slow in view of 22...♖b6.

21...♗xf3

I had foreseen, and was content with, the game continuation, but in fact 21...♖a6!?, anyway, is also promising.

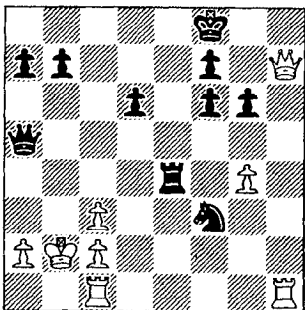
22 ♖xc4

White takes this one opportunity to grab the d5-square for his knight (i.e. now that the black knight is unavailable for a recapture on c4).

22...♖xc4 23 ♖d5 ♖xe4

Played with a crafty defence, in mind. I was a little surprised that my opponent, without much thought, now immediately traded on f6, although there is no obvious way for him to improve his position.

24 ♖xf6+ exf6 25 ♖xh7+ ♖f8



26 ♖h8+

26 ♖cf1!? is objectively a better practical try but even after 26...♖e5 27 ♖h8+ ♖e7 28 ♖xf6+ ♖d7 29 ♖d1 ♖b5+ 30 ♖a1 ♖c5 31 ♖b1 it is Black who is the one trying to win.

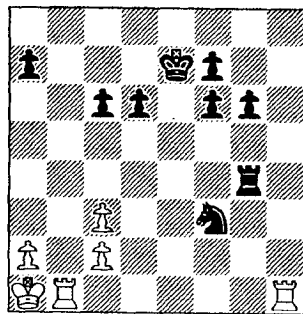
26...♖e7

I was pretty confident around this stage of the game. I felt that my king was as safe as houses and my knight would be a rock in the centre. Although I was the exchange down I envisaged a preponderance of passed pawns on the kingside.

27 ♖c8 ♖b5+ 28 ♖a1 ♖c6

Though 28...♖c4!? was a consideration, this all seemed so straightforward to me. The g4-pawn was as good as mine and a troublesome passed pawn of White's own seemed only a very remote possibility. Read on!

29 ♖xc6 bxc6 30 ♖b1 ♖xg4



To be honest I barely gave it a hearing but in fact perhaps 30...a5 may have been shrewder.

31 ♖b7+ ♖e6 32 ♖xa7

I'm still convinced that Black is winning although I'm not entirely sure of the correct course of action. What is clear is that somehow I managed to beat about the bush and my worst nightmare, as regards White's passed a-pawn, became a reality!

32...g5 33 a4 ♖f4

Possibly this isn't best, but the result was certainly a lot of fun for the bemused audience.

34 ♖a8 g4 35 a5 ♖f5

Though Black wouldn't be worse, I was determined not to trade my g-pawn for White's a-pawn. For example, I found 35...g3 36 ♖g8 ♖g5 37 ♖g1 to be unacceptable.

36 ♖b2 g3 37 ♖g8 ♖g5 38 ♖a1!

Now things start to get tricky as the advantage of having two rooks becomes apparent!

38...♖e4 39 a6 ♖e7 40 ♖b8!

On the last move of the time control White plays the best way to keep the pressure on. I was hoping for 40 a7? when 40...♖b7+ would guarantee getting the a-pawn for free or promoting my g-pawn. Also

cute, though, was 40 ♖a5+ d5 41 a7 ♖b7+! 42 ♖a2 ♖xa7 when obstacles prevent either rook from catching the g-pawn.

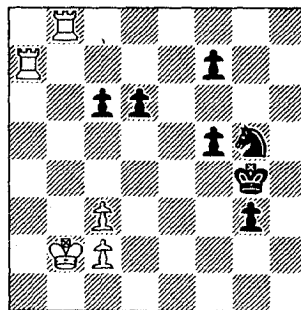
40...♖a7 41 ♖b7 ♖a8 42 a7 ♖g4

Regarding White's a-pawn, this certainly wasn't the sort of position that I had been looking for!

43 ♖b8

Okay, so now my rook bites the dust, but, despite being so much material down, I still had some cause for optimism.

43...♖xa7 44 ♖xa7 f5



Around this time a visiting dignitary enquired to our all-play-all tournament organizer, "Aren't rooks supposed to be very good". Upon a reply of "Certainly", his next observation was "Well, that Grandmaster doesn't have any!".

I can tell you that this feature wasn't lost on me but nevertheless I set my stall out. White knows what he can expect and he has a few moves to try and do something about it.

45 ♖g8 f6

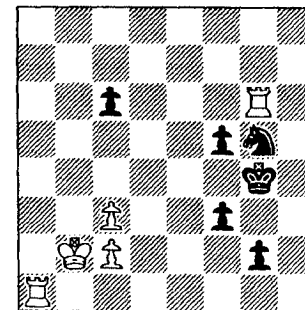
A necessary insertion to prevent 46 ♖xf7 and then 47 ♖fg7.

46 ♖d8

A shock for me as I was expecting 46 ♖g6 which I thought (but for the

record wasn't entirely sure!) was a draw with something like 46...g2 47 ♖a1 f4 48 ♖xf6 f3 49 c4 ♖g3 50 ♖g6 f2 51 ♖xg5+ ♖h2 52 ♖h5+ ♖g3 53 ♖g5+ ♖h2 etc.

46...g2 47 ♖a1 f4 48 ♖xd6 f5 49 ♖g6 f3



50 ♖a8?

After a long hard game with the expenditure of much energy, White makes a critical miscalculation. Though, for White, this compares unfavourably with the last drawing variation I gave, despite the extra black f-pawn White can still in fact hold on by passive defence. 50 ♖g1! ♖f4 51 ♖g8 is just the ticket as 51...f2 52 ♖xg2 f1=♖ 53 ♖2xg5 should be okay.

50...♖h5!

And certainly not falling for 50...g1=♖? 51 ♖xg5+ ♖xg5 52 ♖g8+.

51 ♖g7 ♖h6!

Again not 51...g1=♖? 52 ♖h8+ ♖g4 53 ♖xg5+ while 51...f2 52 ♖h8+ ♖g4 53 ♖hg8 would see White achieving his aim. Now the pawns cannot be stopped.

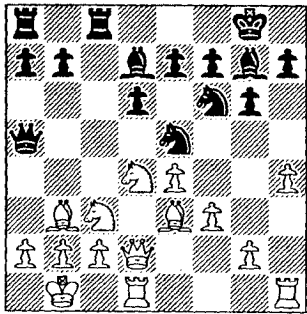
52 ♖c7 g1=♖ 53 ♖h8+ ♖g6 54 ♖g8+ ♖f6 55 ♖xc6+ ♖e5 56 ♖cg6 f2 0-1

Game 4

S.Petersen White
C.Ward Black

Politiken Cup, Copenhagen 2000

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♖c4 ♙g7 7 f3 0-0 8 ♖e3 ♗c6 9 ♗d2 ♙d7 10 0-0-0 ♗a5 11 ♖b1 ♗e5 12 ♖b3 ♗fc8 13 h4

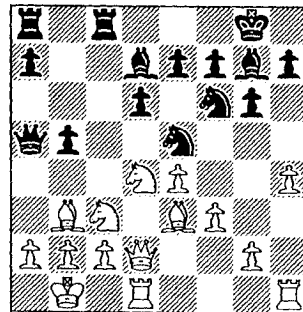


Here we have the starting position for a system that has long been recommended as White's most reliable way of meeting the ...♗a5 variation. A touch of subtlety, combined with an offensive pawn thrust, it is a kind of halfway house. As Black has not yet bagged White's h-pawn, he is reluctant to concede the exchange on c3 right now and so must make a decision on an alternative course of action.

13...♗c4

A natural progression which I am specifically suggesting in this position in order to introduce some new concepts and ideas. I am well aware that this deviates from the move on which I concentrated in *WWTD*. There, I recommended the pawn sacrifice 13...b5 and, before moving on, I do feel that I should say a few words on that. Since my first book I have had had a lot of experience in

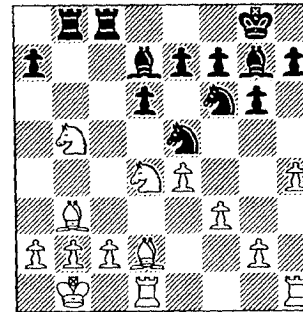
this line and I have reached the conclusion that pawn-grabbing is White's best way to thwart Black's attempts to prise open the b-file on his own terms. Eliminating alternatives first, though, (by offering favourable Black examples!) both:



a) 14 h5 ♗c4 15 ♖xc4 bxc4 16 hxg6 fxg6 17 ♖h6 ♖h8 18 ♗f5 gxf5 19 e5 ♗xe5 20 ♗de1 ♗g3 21 ♗xe7 ♗g6 22 ♗d5 ♗e8 23 ♗he1 ♖c6 24 ♗xe8+ ♗xe8 25 ♗e7+ ♗xe7 26 ♗xe7 ♗d5 27 ♗xa7 f4 28 ♗a6 c3 29 bxc3 ♗xh6 30 ♗xc6 ♗e6 31 a4 ♖e5 32 a5 ♗e7 33 ♖b6 ♗c4 34 ♖b8+ ♖g7 35 ♖b3 ♗d5 36 ♗d3 ♗xc3+ 37 ♖c1 ♗c5 38 a6 ♗g1+ 39 ♖b2 ♗b1+ 0-1 D.Bisby-A.Summerscale, British Championship 1996, and

b) 14 ♖h6 ♖xh6 15 ♗xh6 ♗xc3 16 bxc3 ♗xc3 17 ♗c1 a5 18 a3 ♖b8 19 ♗b2 ♗c7 20 c3 ♗c4 21 ♗c1 e5 22 ♗c2 ♖e6 23 ♖a2 d5 24 ♗g5 ♖g7 25 h5 h6 26 ♗c1 g5 27 exd5 ♗xd5 28 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 29 ♗d1 ♖e6 30 ♗e3 ♗c5 31 ♖xc4 bxc4+ 32 ♖a2 ♗b6 33 g4 ♗b7 34 ♗f1 ♗d8 35 ♗b2 ♗b3+ 36 ♖a1 ♗d3 37 ♗xb3 cxb3 38 ♗d1 e4 39 fxe4 ♖xg4 40 ♗b2 ♗xc3 41 ♗a4 ♗c2 0-1 D.Sikder-I.Rausis, Vlissingen 1999, are certainly manageable for Black.

Hence 14 ♗cxb5, when 14...♗xd2 15 ♖xd2! is correct as my previous offering of 15...♗c4 is probably not accurate in view of 16 ♖xc4 ♗xc4 17 b3 ♗c5 18 c4!. So instead 15...♗ab8!?

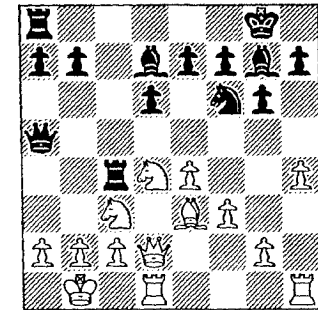


when the question is just how much compensation Black has for the pawn. Certainly in both 16 ♗c3 ♖e8 17 ♗c2 ♗f7 18 h5 ♗b6 19 hxg6 hxg6 20 ♖a1 ♗ec4 21 ♖c1 e5 22 ♖xc4 ♗xc4 23 ♗b3 ♗xc2 24 ♗d2 ♗xd2 25 ♖xd2 d5 26 exd5 ♗xd5 27 ♗d1 f5 28 ♗c3 ♗b4 29 ♗c5 ♖f7 30 ♗c1 ♗c8 31 ♗e2 ♗d5 32 a3 ♖b5 33 ♗g1 ♗f4 34 g3 ♗e2 35 ♗xe2 ♖xe2 36 f4 exf4 37 ♖xf4 ♖d4 38 ♗e1 ♖c4 39 ♗d7 ♖e6 40 ♗e5+ ♖f6 41 ♗f3 ♖b6 42 ♖e5+ ♖e7 43 ♖c3 ♗d6 44 ♖b4+ ♖c5 45 ♖d2 ♖f2 46 ♖f4+ ♖e7 47 ♗h1 ♖d5 48 ♗f1 ♗c2 49 ♗e5 ♖d4 50 ♖b1 ♖f6 51 ♗d3 ♖e4 52 ♗e1 g5 0-1 B.Molnar-A.Summerscale, Cannes 1999, and

16 a4 a6 17 ♗a3 ♖e8 18 ♗e2 ♗f7 19 ♖e3 ♗b6 20 ♖xb6 ♗xb6 21 ♗c3 h5 22 ♗he1 ♖f8 23 ♗d5 ♖b7 24 a5 ♗c5 25 ♗e3 ♗xa5 26 ♗d5 ♗xd5 27 ♖xd5 ♗xb2+ 28 ♖xb2 ♗d3+ 29 ♖b1 ♗xe1 30 f4 ♖d4 31 ♗ac4 ♖b5 32 g3 e6 33 ♖b7 ♗g2 34 ♗xg2 ♖xc4 35 f5 e5 36 fxg6 fxg6 37 ♖c8 a5 38 ♖d7 ♖e7 39 ♖c6 ♖f2 0-1 R.Britton-

M.Olesen, Burlington's Staunton International 1994, Black evidently had enough to go on. I understand that this type of 'pressure for a pawn' endgame won't be to everyone's liking and even I occasionally pined for those queens. However, despite a slight flaw in the specific move-order, it is pleasing to see that my ideas in *WWTD* obviously didn't go completely to waste (particularly the plan of ...♖e8, making way for the knight trip round to c4). The fact that Grandmaster, and Dragon expert, Igor Rausis, still includes 13...b5 in his repertoire is also a promising feature but, like I said, here I want to focus on some fresh material.

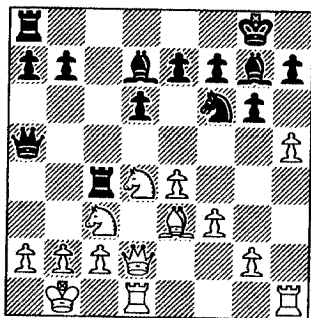
14 ♖xc4 ♗xc4



15 h5

This game essentially deals with the direct approach by the h-pawn, without any dark-squared bishop intervention. If 15 ♗b3 first, then, after 15...♗c7 16 h5, I gave it the usual treatment, 16...♗xc3 17 ♗xc3 ♗xc3 18 bxc3 ♗xh5, in M.Strange-C.Ward, Copenhagen KS 1997. As usual, the theory is that Black is happy to offer rook for knight in return for crippling White's queenside pawns and netting the h-pawn. White's play was predictable, as the game continued 19 ♖d4 ♗f6 20 e5

(opening up the d-file for the rooks but promoting Black's kingside majority) 20...dxe5 21 ♖xe5 ♖c6 22 ♜d4 ♖d5 23 ♖xg7 ♗xg7 24 c4 ♖e3 25 ♜h2. Here, in fact, my opponent offered me a draw but, with a rock bishop on c6 and some handy kingside pawns to play with, I felt well within my rights to decline. Indeed, after 25...e5 26 ♜d4 h5 27 ♖a5 ♖f5 28 ♖xc6 ♖xh4 29 ♖xe5 ♜e8, I had managed to even out the material situation while retaining my structural pluses.



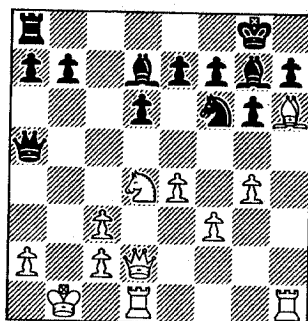
15...♜xc3

I guess by now you've figured out that my general view is that, pretty much whatever the position, it is worth sacrificing the exchange on c3 if it involves doubling White's c-pawns and picking up the offered h-pawn.

16 bxc3

As it threatened to keep the h-pawn, I had vaguely considered the possibility of 16 h6 ♜c5 17 b4. This introduced such crazy lines as 17...♗b6 18 ♖b3 ♜xc2 on which I hadn't formulated an exact assessment but certainly expected to be good fun! Determined to attack, my opponent avoided the more usual endgame scenario of 16 ♗xc3 ♗xc3 17 bxc3 ♖xh5.

16...♖xh5 17 g4 ♖f6 18 ♖h6



So, no hanging about by White who decides to leave out ♖b3 as he wants that knight to assist in his assault on the enemy monarch. The drawback is that White's own king remains a little exposed with Black's queen sitting pretty on a5.

18...♖h8!?

Actually 18...♖h6, and if 19 ♜xh6 then 19...♖xg4! 20 fxg4 (or 20 ♖b3 ♗e5) 20...♖xe4, also looks very reasonable but, if possible, it's always nice to be able to preserve these bishops.

19 ♖f5?!

I could feel that this move, predictably attracting the spectators, was coming, although it is almost certainly not good. Of course, 20 ♖xe7 mate is threatened and 19...gxh5?? would run into 20 ♗g5+. Nevertheless the text enables Black to swap off what is most often his least effective minor piece in these types of middlegames.

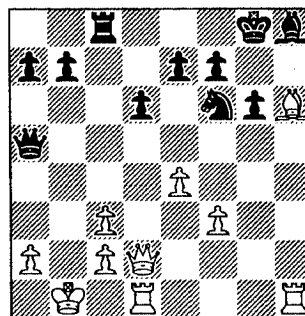
19...♖xf5

I opted for simple chess although actually I could see nothing wrong with 19...♜e8 which, in heralding 20...♖e6 as a threat, may even force the knight back to d4.

20 gxh5

White is dreaming of making something of the now half-open g-file but in reality he should be more concerned about his own bare king.

20...♜c8 21 fxg6 hxg6



Easily my longest think of the game, which certainly seemed to give the impression to interested spectators that I might be struggling. The truth, though, was that I considered both pawn recaptures to be favourable for me. The safest option (keeping the h-file blocked) is 21...fxg6 when I had decided that White's only real option was 22 e5 ♗xe5 23 ♜h1 ♗b5+ 24 ♖c1. Black is better, but, provided I calculated 21...hxg6 correctly, I felt that I shouldn't have to be dealing with e-file pressure.

22 ♖f8

Being very aware of this theme, naturally this was the first move I had looked at (and checked!), but others included: 22 ♖g5 ♗xc3 23 ♜xh8+ ♖xh8 24 ♖xf6+ ♗xf6 25 ♗h6+ ♖g8 when the black queen on f6 is a more than adequate defender; 22 ♖e3 ♗xc3 23 ♜xh8+ ♖xh8 24 ♜h1+ ♖g8 25 ♗h2 ♖h5 when White retains his dark-squared bishop, but he is already two pawns down and others are threatening to drop off; 22 e5 ♗xe5 23 ♜h1

♗b5+ 24 ♖c1 e6 (the advantage of ...hxg6, although here 24...♖g4 looks promising too) 25 ♗xd6 ♖d5 with huge problems on c3.

22...♖xf8 23 ♖xh8+

In for a penny, in for a pound. It's not going to work though!

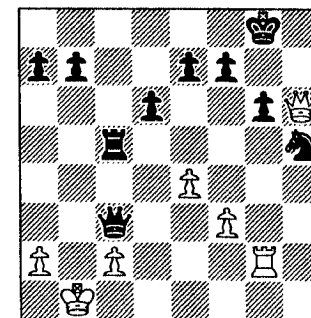
23...♖xh8 24 ♗h6+ ♖g8 25 ♜h1 ♖h5

The point. The h-file is permanently sealed off.

26 ♜h4 ♗xc3 27 ♜g4 ♜c8

Threatening mate via ...♗xc2+.

28 ♜g2 ♜c5 0-1



Coincidentally defending the knight, but ...♖b5+ is the real killer.

Game 5

I.Rausis White

C.Ward Black

Hastings Premier 1998

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 g6 6 ♖e3 ♖g7 7 ♖3 ♖c6 8 ♗d2 0-0

Though I would hardly describe my style with the White pieces as 'boring', it is true that I am more of a 1 d4 player. The Dragon is exciting at the worst of times but an extra spicy ingredient is added when you find yourself up against a fellow Dragon buff. However, it soon became clear that my Latvian GM

opponent, very knowledgeable about this opening, wasn't sure which line to test out. Here, for example, he wrote down 9 0-0-0, only to change his mind.

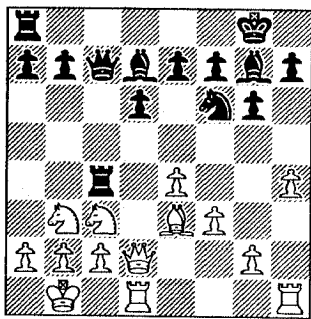
9 ♖c4 ♗d7 10 0-0-0 ♖a5 11 ♙b3 ♜fc8 12 h4 ♘e5 13 ♖b1

Indecision again as 13 h5 finds its way onto the score sheet before being crossed out.

13...♘c4

Being a Dragon expert himself, Igor later said that he was expecting the previously covered pawn sacrifice 13...b5!?. With a totally sweeping statement he then promptly added; "that's just a draw"! (Rumour has it that Batsford turned down his offer to produce a book 'Drawing With The Dragon'!)

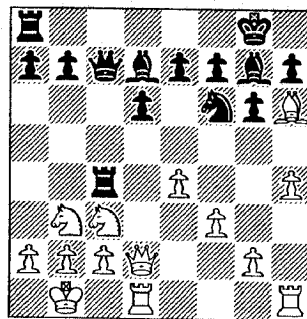
14 ♙xc4 ♜xc4 15 ♘b3 ♖c7



My opponent obviously knew that I had frequently played 13...b5, while here I have also indulged in 15...♖a6. I am sticking to 15...♖c7 for this manuscript but, who knows, perhaps the other move will make an appearance in my 3rd edition!? For the record, I notice that 15...♖d8 is also occasionally played, while I've also had 15...♖e5 16 g4 ♜ac8 17 f4? ♖xc3!! 18 bxc3 ♘xe4 19 ♖d3 ♘xc3+ 20 ♖c1

♘xa2+ 21 ♖d2 ♘b4 22 ♖f1 ♜xc2+ 23 ♖e1 ♜8c3. Great fun (oh yes and winning!) but clearly 17 ♖d4 is a stronger reaction. Then Black remains in the game but must be careful not to get his queen trapped.

16 ♙h6



Only too aware of the potential power of the famous Dragon bishop, White immediately takes steps to try and trade it off.

16...♙h8!?

A logical choice, but one which is not without its drawbacks. For starters, with the black king a little short of squares, it's rather necessary that a white knight is prevented from arriving at e7! The text encourages all sorts of complications and it should be mentioned that 16...♙xh6 17 ♖xh6 ♜xc3 18 bxc3 ♖xc3 would be an alternative solid continuation.

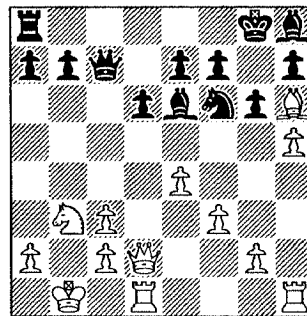
17 h5 ♜xc3!?

Though this is not forced, I specifically played it now so that White wouldn't have the option of bailing out into the endgame.

18 bxc3

Yes, 18 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 19 bxc3 ♘xh5 is, if not exactly the same, certainly a similar old story.

18...♙e6



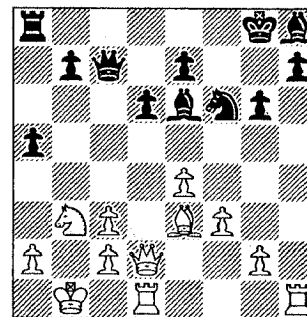
The text improves the placement of the light-squared bishop (giving it both aggressive and defensive options) and enables any e4-e5 ideas to be met by ...♘d5. Note 18 ...♘h5?? was not possible because of 19 ♜xh5 gxh5 20 ♖g5+.

In the following, it seems to me that White should at least have interjected hxg6 somewhere in the proceedings. However he never got around to forcing Black into making a decision on which way to recapture and 18...♜c8 19 e5 dxe5 20 g4 e4 21 g5 ♘d5 22 ♖xd5 ♖xc3 23 ♜d4 ♖xc2+ 24 ♖a1 ♙e6 turned out very nicely! (0-1 A.Gypser-L.Lukat, Ludwigshafen 1998)

19 hxg6 fxg6 20 ♙e3

This bishop no longer has a future on h6. It gets in the way of plans on the h-file and can fulfil more of a blocking role in the centre.

20...a5



With the blatant intention of removing the defensive cover on the b-file currently offered by the white knight.

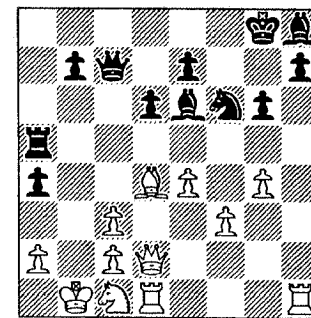
21 ♖d4

The bishop sits nicely here but unfortunately for White the rules prohibit this d4-square being shared with his knight!

21...a4 22 ♘c1 ♜a5

This is the sneaky move that was always on my mind but in fact the more usual 22...♜c8 is also possible. Then 23 g4 ♖a5 24 ♜h4 ♜c4 25 ♜dh1 ♘xe4! 26 fxe4 ♖xd4 has rightly been suggested as leaving Black more than holding his own but, of course, as usual there are other available deviations. The tempting 24 g5 ♘h5 25 ♙xh8 ♖xh8 isn't that fantastic for White, who still cannot get at the enemy king, so the solid 24 ♘d3 might be a better bet.

23 g4



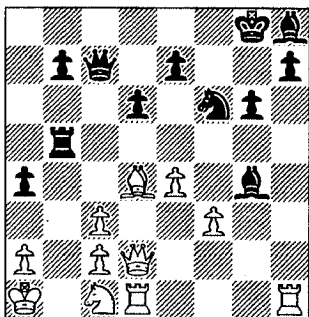
A very provocative move, but with his own king under siege, White wants a share of the fun. I guess I was expecting 23 ♘d3, but, being naturally worried about his a-pawn, Igor preferred to show offensive intent of his own.

23...♙b5+

Also fairly instructive is 23...♙xg4 24 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 25 fxg4

♖b5+ 26 ♘b3 axb3 27 cxb3 ♗g5!? as seen in J.Gunnarsson-C.Ward, Politiken Cup 1997. Black doesn't even have a pawn for the exchange, but the queen, rook and bishop work very well together. Alas, after 28 ♖h3 ♖c6 29 ♖e1 ♖xg4 30 ♖h6 ♖xc3 31 ♖xh7+ ♖f8 32 ♖f1+, disaster struck in the form of 32...♖e8?? (allowing the simple 33 ♖f7+f3). I know it's my Copenhagen holiday tournament again and I must confess to having done a bit (well actually quite a lot!) of partying the night before. I know that it's a bad example to set but I have to give some excuse for blowing it! Anyway, sadly, a close inspection reveals how, with 32...♖f6 instead, only Black could be better, e.g. 33 ♖h8+ ♖f7 34 ♖h7+ ♖e6 35 ♖g8+ ♖e5 36 ♖d5+ ♖xd5 37 exd5 ♖xd5.

24 ♖a1 ♖xg4!

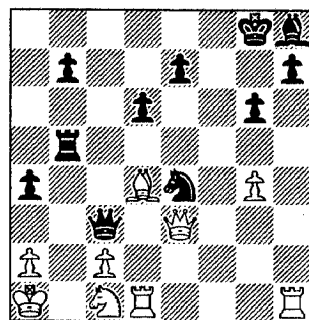


The sacrifice here differs from the previously-mentioned encounter in that 25 ♖xf6 would now be suicide with the king stuck on a1.

25 fxg4

25 ♖d3 ♖d7 is, I suppose, playable for White although he must simply get used to the fact that he no longer has a g-pawn!

25...♖xe4 26 ♖e3 ♖xc3+



27 ♖xc3!

This, combined with White's next move, is undoubtedly his most accurate defence. After 27 ♖xc3 ♖xc3+ 28 ♖xc3 ♘xc3, both 29 ♘d3 and 29 ♘e2 offer him inferior versions of the endgame actually reached.

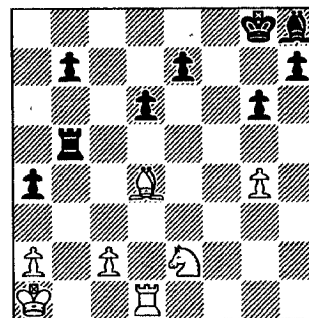
27...♘xc3 28 ♘e2

Mate was threatened with 28...♖b1, and 28 ♖xc3?? hardly saves the day! With the text, White offers to return a whole piece rather than just the exchange. However the package is not as generous as it may seem. After 28...♘xe2 29 ♖xh8 ♖xh8 30 ♖he1, although the extra three pawns are handy, both 30...♘c3 31 ♖d3 and 30...♖e5 31 ♖d2 lead to positions where the knight is significantly inferior to a rook.

28...♘xd1

Reiterating my standpoint, although I have seen the variation 28...♘xe2 29 ♖xh8 ♖xh8 30 ♖he1 ♖e5 assessed as '±', I don't agree. After, say, 31 ♖d2 ♘d4 32 ♖xe5 dxe5 33 c3, despite having three pawns for the exchange, in fact I would be more worried about the potentially passed white c-pawn. That is being realistic not negative. The fact is that knights aren't so good on open boards like this and Black would much rather each side had an extra rook.

29 ♖xd1



The very long think that I had over my previous move prompted my opponent to offer me a draw here. However, playing in a high profile all-play-all event, I considered it my duty to keep the audience entertained.

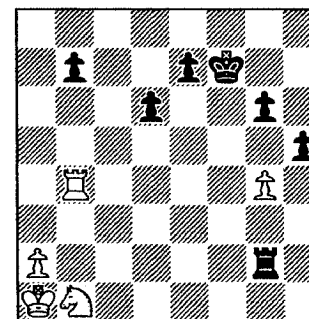
29...♖xd4+ 30 ♖xd4 a3

Preserving the a-pawn and keeping the white king boxed in.

31 ♘c3 ♖c5 32 ♘b1 ♖xc2 33 ♘xa3 ♖g2 34 ♖b4 ♖f7 35 ♘b1

35 ♖xb7 ♖xg4 would be silly by White, whose knight is a long way from Black's kingside pawns and whose a-pawn can easily be tracked by the black rook.

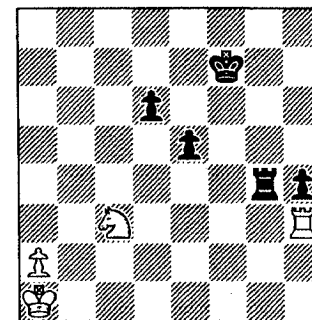
35...h5



Bearing in mind that White can't take on b7 without my capturing his g-pawn, it was a bit annoying for me to have to offer this swap. However he does have a knight and the

text does provide me with a passed h-pawn.

36 gxh5 gxh5 37 ♖xb7 h4 38 ♖b3 e5 39 ♖h3 ♖g4 40 ♘c3



Although recent events had reduced the pawn count to just two for the knight, I was still quite optimistic. Whilst I knew that I couldn't lose with my next move, this last act before the time control was played rapidly, leaving my fate (win or draw) in the hands of the gods.

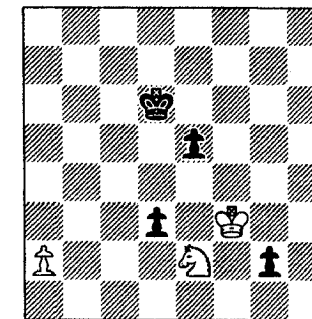
40...♖g3

If I could have my time over again, I would select 40...♖e6!?. Then I suspect that Black has the better practical chances, though it's certainly not a guaranteed win.

41 ♖xg3 hxg3 42 ♖b2

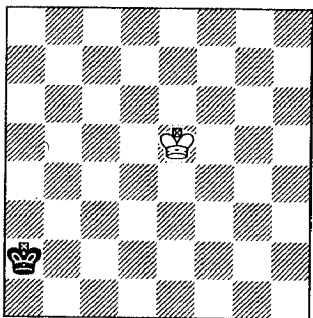
As it transpires, the king is whisked over just in time to hold the draw.

42...d5 43 ♘e2 g2 44 ♖c3! ♖e6 45 ♖d3 d4 46 ♖e4 ♖d6 47 ♖f3 d3



48 ♖xg2

Correctly avoiding 48 ♖g1?? e4+ when White loses as his king is too overworked. 48...dxe2 49 ♖f2 ♖c5 50 ♖xe2 ♖b4 51 ♖e3 ♖a3 52 ♖e4 ♖xa2 53 ♖xe5 1/2-1/2

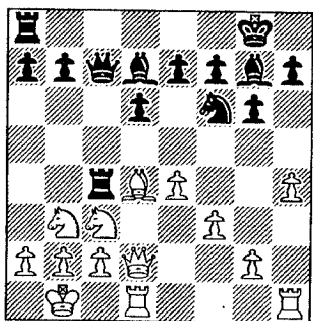


I guess there is not much more to say about the position. Okay I didn't win, but you can't say I didn't try!

Game 6

H.Stefansson White
C.Ward Black
Reykjavik Open 1998

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 g6 6 ♖e3 ♖g7 7 f3 ♖c6 8 ♖d2 0-0 9 ♖c4 ♖d7 10 0-0-0 ♖a5 11 h4 ♖e5 12 ♖b3 ♖fc8 13 ♖b1 ♖c4 14 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 15 ♖b3 ♖c7 16 ♖d4



White's most solid continuation. The c3-knight is provided with some support while the a1-h8 diagonal is challenged.

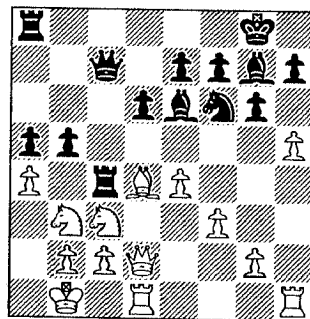
16...♖e6

A nice flexible move. In vacating d7, the bishop not only switches to a diagonal that points to the white king but also avoids any e4-e5 tactics along the d-file. Moreover extra control is added to the d5-square, theoretically halting any ♖xf6 and ♖d5 sequences that White may have been planning.

17 h5 a5

Exposing the congestion of white pieces on the queenside. If Black gets in ...a4, then the steed must budge after which, without the support of this b3-knight, White's d4-bishop will be a victim of a ...♖xe4 tactic.

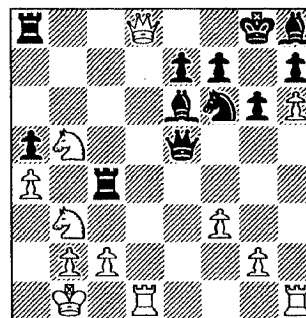
18 a4 b5!



A pawn sacrifice designed to buy some time in the ultimate race for checkmate. Despite the fact that the older 18...♖b4 continues to appear in other Dragon texts, this, in my view, is a definite improvement.

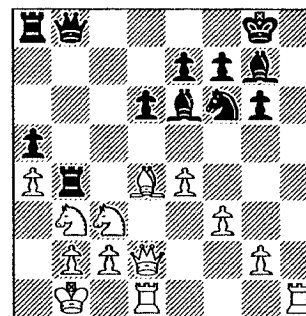
19 ♖xb5 ♖b8 20 ♖c3

Avoiding the tricky 20 h6 ♖h8 21 e5?! dxe5 22 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 which is tempting in view of 23 ♖d8+?



However that in fact loses to 23...♖e8! as, not only is the queen *en prise*, but there is also a mate on b2 to contend with.

20...♖b4 21 hxg6 hxg6

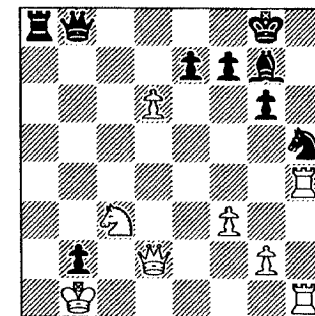


22 ♖xf6

White obviously felt the need to intercept Black's straightforward b-file bashing plan of 22...♖xb3 but this was a horrible concession for White to make. Now only an unlikely trebling of major pieces along the h-file would enable him to deliver mate. In terms of a practical outing, with plenty of appealing deviations along the way, 22 ♖d5 ♖xd5 23 exd5 ♖b7 24 ♖h4 ♖b8 25 ♖dh1 ♖xa4 26 g4 ♖xd4 27 ♖xd4 a4 28 g5 axb3 29 gxf6 bxc2+ 30 ♖c1 exf6 (Keeping our favourite bishop open here with 30...♖xf6?? hits a big stumbling block in 31 ♖h8+, or 31 ♖xf6 for that matter!) looked

very promising for Black but eventually ended as a draw in S. van Blitterswijk-O.Salmensuu, Groningen 1999.

However, considering this to be a critical position in the whole variation, most of my home analysis had centred around 22 ♖h4!?. On this square the rook not only prepares a doubling-up but prevents a future ...♖xe4 tactic (i.e. ♖xe4 would defend the d4-bishop). Prompted by a rare practical example in a very old correspondence game, I then looked at 22...♖xb3 23 cxb3 ♖xb3 24 ♖b5 (24 ♖d5 e5 25 ♖c3 ♖xd5 26 exd5 ♖b7 is most satisfactory.) 24...♖b4 25 ♖dh1 ♖xa4 26 ♖c3 ♖xd4!? 27 ♖xd4 ♖h5 28 ♖d2 a4 29 e5 a3 30 exd6 axb2 (30...exd6 is also possible.) reaching the position below:



From here:

a) 31 dxe7 ♖xc3! 32 e8=♖+ (or of course 32 ♖xc3 ♖a1+! 33 ♖c2 b1=♖+) 32...♖xe8 33 ♖xc3 ♖e2 34 ♖xb2 ♖d3+ 35 ♖c2 with 35...♖a1+ netting the queen.

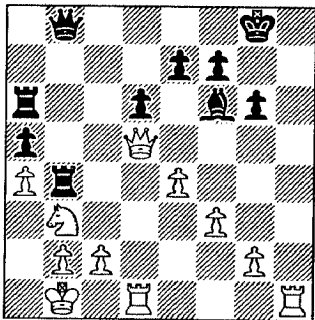
b) 31 d7 ♖xc3 32 d8=♖+ ♖xd8 33 ♖xc3 when 33...♖d5 or 33...e5!? both leave the white king more nervous than its counterpart.

c) 31 ♖a4 exd6 32 ♖b4 (If 32 ♖xb2 then 32...♖b3!) 32...♖a7 leaving the Dragon bishop doing a grand job.

22...♙xf6 23 ♘d5 ♙xd5 24 ♖xd5

If 24 exd5 then Black's plan couldn't be simpler. Just capture the a-pawn, return the rook to b4 and hit home with ...a4.

24...♖a6!?



A multi-purpose move. The d-pawn is protected (thus enabling ...e6), while Black paves the way for trebling on the b-file.

25 f4

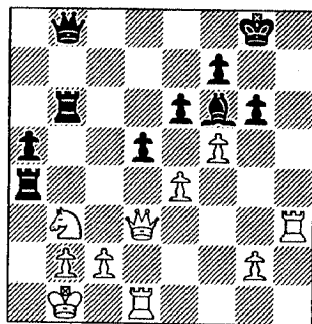
Justifying my last move; in the event of 25 ♖h6 I was intending 25...e6, e.g. 26 ♖d2 ♖ab6 27 ♖dh1 ♖xb3 28 cxb3 ♖xb3 with more than enough action on b2. Note the cheapo 25 ♖h7 would obviously also be met by 25...e6 rather than 25...♙xh7?? 26 ♖xf7+ ♙h6 27 f4 with a rather undesirable mate net!

25...e6 26 ♖d3 ♖ab6

With the obvious exchange sac ...♖xb3 on the cards, White's b2-pawn looks in line for some serious attention.

27 ♖h3 ♖xa4 28 f5 d5!

In view of Black's unsubtle plan of ...♖b4 and ...a4, I had expected White to try and get to my king in any way possible. Fortunately, it seems that my calculations were quite good as my dark-squared domination enabled me to dodge the white pawns that soon appeared on the light squares.



29 fxе6 ♖е5

The point behind my last move.

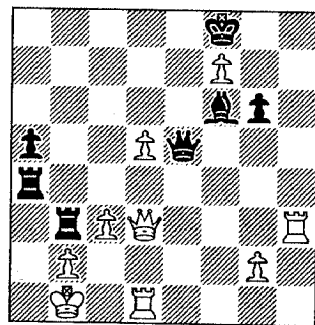
30 exf7+ ♙f8

Staying on the dark squares avoids any checks.

31 c3

I suppose objectively better was 31 ♖c3 ♖xc3 32 bxc3 ♖xe4 33 ♙a2 ♖e2 although White survives only to enter a grim endgame.

31...♖xb3 32 exd5

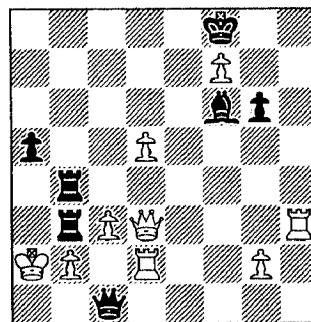


White has three pawns for the piece but Black's remaining army is poised to strike.

32...♖ab4

This was always my intention as the rook is immune to capture thanks to the mate threats on b2. Nevertheless one can't argue with 32...♖xb2+ 33 ♙xb2 ♖b8+ 34 ♙c1 ♙g5+ either!

33 ♖d2 ♖e1+ 34 ♙a2 ♖c1 0-1



I was hoping to end in style with 35 ♖e2 ♖a3+! and mate to follow. Clearly, though, my highly rated Icelandic GM opponent decided that now might be a good time to halt the proceedings!

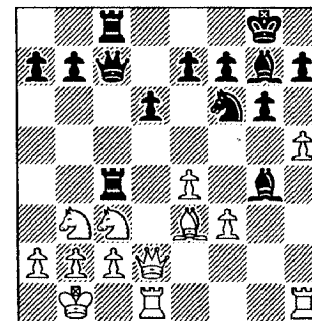
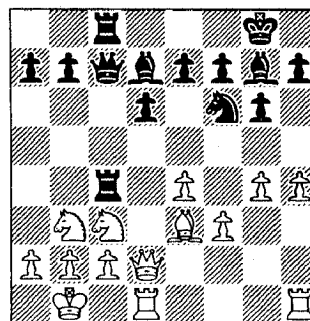
Game 7

C.Spulber White
Socaciu Black
Romania 1971

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♙e3 ♙g7 7 f3 0-0 8 ♖d2 ♘c6 9 ♙c4 ♙d7 10 0-0-0 ♖a5 11 ♙b3 ♖fc8 12 ♙b1 ♘e5 13 g4

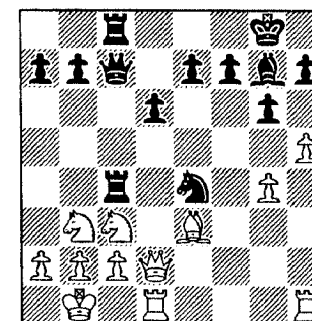
This particular position will be discussed in the next game but I have selected the present short encounter because it completes the White's 16th move options from our main (♙b1 and h4) line.

13...♘c4 14 ♙xc4 ♖xc4 15 h4 ♖ac8 16 ♘b3 ♖c7



If you weren't aware of it before, you will undoubtedly be well-versed in this idea by the end of the chapter.

17 h5 ♙xg4!



Typically, this kind of combination also involves a ...♙xc3 sacrifice at some stage. However, with Black having all of his major pieces aimed at c2, the text adds a new dimension to the play.

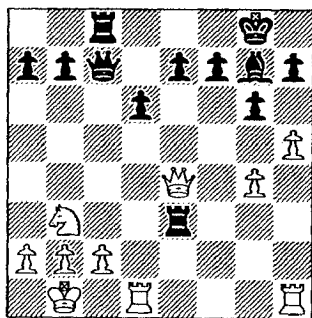
19 ♖d5

A better fight would be put up with 19 ♖xe4 ♙xc2 20 hxg6 hxg6. However, even after 21 ♙c1 ♙xd2, White must accept that he has lost his queen and 22 ♖bx2 (Yes, 22 ♙xc7 ♙xb2+ 23 ♖c1 ♙xc7+ 24 ♖d1 ♙xa2 is horrendous.) 22...♗d7 would see the black pawn mass rule the day.

19...♙xc3

Black is spoilt for choice. Both 19...♙xc3 and 19...e6 are equally winning.

20 ♗xe4 ♙xe3! 0-1



This rook is immune to capture, as the black queen will descend on c2 and then b2.

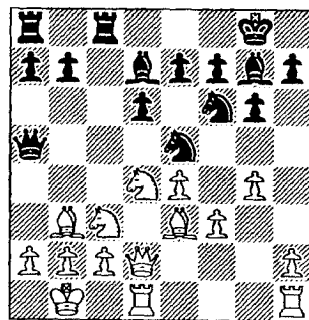
Game 8

D.Leygue White

I.Rausis Black

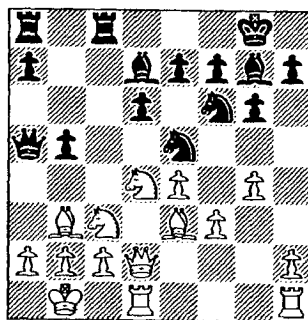
Creon Open 1999

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 g6 6 ♖e3 ♖g7 7 f3 ♖c6 8 ♗d2 0-0 9 ♖c4 ♖d7 10 0-0-0 ♗a5 11 g4 ♙f8 12 ♖b3 ♖e5 13 ♖b1



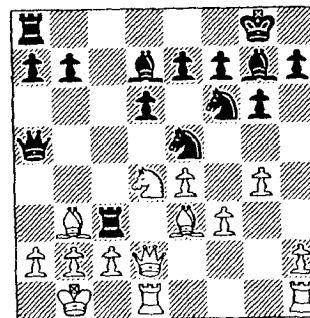
Though I skipped over this in game 6, this is a White system in its own right. Effectively trading h4 for g4, it is not as fast in the h-file attacking stakes but still has its pluses. The fact that g4-g5 could come at any moment means that Black should now beware of a possible white knight invasion on d5. Also he must be sure that he is prepared to meet the central push e4-e5 (possibly exposing the d7-bishop) if his knight has been moved from e5 (e.g. after the likes of ...♖c4, ♙xc4 ♙xc4 and ♖b3). On the other side of the coin, the f3-pawn is immediately weakened so now Black's reply isn't a sacrifice.

13...b5!?



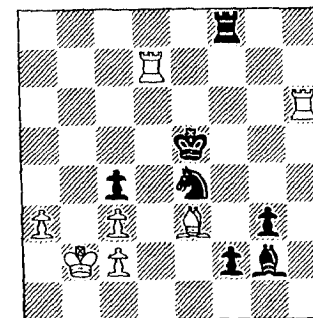
This is the reply that I wish to concentrate on. Note that the intention is not ...b4, which would merely force the c3-knight onto its

desired post on d5. No, having seen the white king switch to the b-file, Black instead introduces the possibility of recapturing with this b-pawn after a future ...♖c4. You already know (and it would come as no surprise to anyone) that 13...♖c4 has been played before here. Well, recently I found myself doing live commentary on the also not new 13...♙xc3(!).



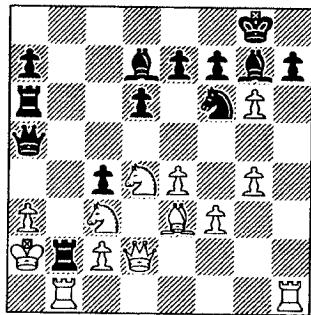
If truth be told, I personally am not really in favour of our typical positional sacrifice when not even a single pawn is bagged in exchange. However, many a strong player has dabbled in this kind of trade which relies purely on structural compensation. Whatever your standpoint, one cannot deny that the following game characterises the resilient features of the Dragon: 14 ♗xc3 ♗xc3 15 bxc3 ♙c8 16 ♖b2 b5 17 h3 a5 18 a3 ♖e8 19 ♙hf1 ♖c7 20 f4 ♖c4+ 21 ♙xc4 bxc4 22 ♙b1 ♖a6 23 ♖e2 ♙c6 24 ♖g3 ♖c7 25 ♖d4 e5 26 ♙xe5 dxe5 27 ♖b6 ♖e6 28 ♙xa5 ♖h6 29 h4 ♖f4 30 ♖e2 ♙xe4 31 ♖xf4 exf4 32 ♖b4 ♖g2 33 ♙f2 f3 34 ♙d1 g5 35 h5? (Often it is his kingside pawn majority that is Black's trump card in the end-game and, with this poor practical decision, White takes that matter too lightly. Of course I could have

discussed plenty of other stages of this encounter but here is a critical point. White could return the exchange via 35 hxg5 ♖xg5 36 ♙dd2 when his outside a-pawn should prove decisive. Instead this doesn't even get moving as the position soon undergoes an amazing transformation. They don't look anything special right now but just keep an eye on those black pawns!) 35...h6 36 ♖e7 f5 37 gxf5 ♖g7 38 f6 ♖xh5 39 ♙d7 g4 40 f7+ ♖xf7 41 ♖h4+ ♖e6 42 ♙h7 ♖f6 43 ♙xh6 ♙f8 44 ♙d2 ♖f5 45 ♖f2 ♖e4 46 ♙d5+ ♖f4 47 ♙d4 ♖e5 48 ♖e3 g3 49 ♙d7 f2



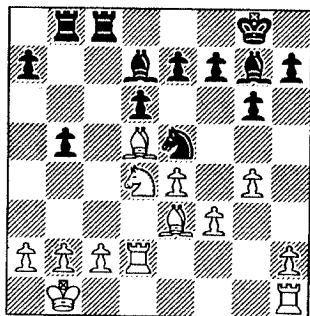
(Okay, the h-one is no longer but I'm sure you see what I mean!) 50 ♙b7 ♖f6 51 ♖d4+ ♖f5 52 ♙b5+ ♖d5 53 ♖c5 ♙f7 0-1 S.Beshukov-M.Turner, Hastings Premier 2001. 14 ♖d5

I'm afraid it's back to more mundane matters! 14 g5 is best met by 14...♖e8 when Black doesn't have to be too worried about being mated down the h-file, with ♖h6 permanently off of the agenda. Also, as a reminder, 14 ♖cxb5 merely initiates a very unfavourable pawn trade by 14...♗xd2 15 ♙xd2 ♙xb5 16 ♖xb5 ♖xf3 and what Black is really after is the likes of 14 h4 ♖c4 15 ♙xc4 bxc4 16 a3 ♙ab8 17 ♖a2 ♙b6 18 h5 ♙cb8 19 ♙b1 ♙a6 20 hxg6 ♙xb2+!



0-1 as seen in S.Barrientos Chavarriaga-H.Halay, Oropesa del Mar 2000.

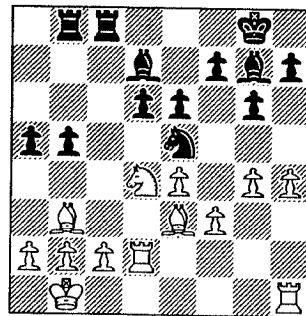
14...♖xd2 15 ♖xd2 ♘xd5 16 ♘xd5 ♖ab8



17 h4

With similar available plans to our main game, 17 h3 a5 18 f4 ♘c4 19 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 20 ♖e1 e5 (Whether Black intends recapturing with the bishop or the pawn this is a move that is always in the locker. That said, 20...♖ac8 and 20...a4 both leave Black and his two bishops bossing things.) 21 fxe5 dxe5 22 ♘b3 ♖e8 23 ♖ed1 ♖xc4 24 ♖a7 ♖a8 25 ♖d8 ♖xd8 26 ♖xd8 ♖e1+ 27 ♘c1 ♖h6 28 ♖xe8+ ♔g7 29 a3 ♖xc1 was easily converted into the full point by Black in R.Guillet-L.Bergez, Fouesnant 1998.

17...e6 18 ♖b3 a5



It is always his light-squared bishop that suffers when White trades queens in the manner that he has. Hunted down by black pawns, it is only preserved by undesirable pawn moves around the king.

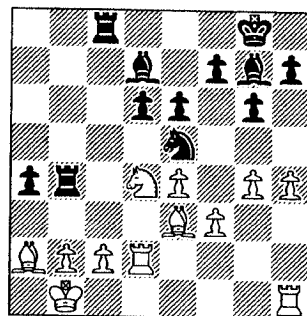
19 a3 a4!

Though not exactly bad, 19...b4 would have given White the opportunity to seal things off with 20 a4.

20 ♖a2 b4

A natural progression. The b-file is destined to be opened up—to the detriment of the white king.

21 axb4 ♖xb4



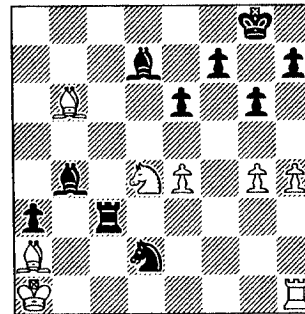
Already White is in big trouble. As well as the obvious 21...♖cb8, Black is threatening 21...♘xf3 when the Dragon bishop gets in on the act to assist with ...♖xb2. White tries to bale out but it's clear that Black's simple, almost effortless, play has gone down a treat.

22 c3 ♖xc3 23 ♘c2 ♖b7 24 ♖xd6

White regains his pawn but his reprieve is only temporary.

24...a3 25 b4 ♖f8 26 ♖b6 ♖xb6 27 ♖xb6 ♘xf3 28 ♘d4 ♘d2+ 29 ♘a1 ♖xb4 0-1

The beauty in this game was the way in which the black pieces just flowed.



Aside from the fact that the white pawns are dropping left, right and centre, any black rook move wields the axe of ...♖c3 mate.

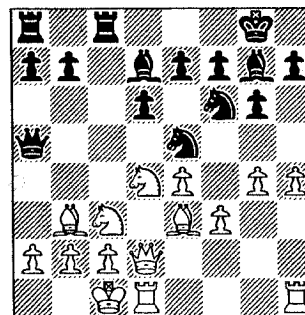
Game 9

J.Boudre White

M.Jaulin Black

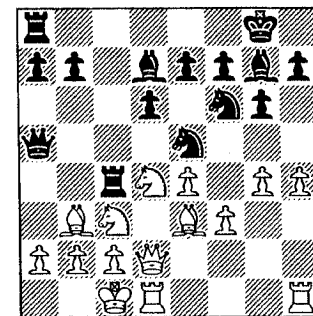
French Team Championship 1997

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 cxd4 5 ♘xd4 g6 6 ♖e3 ♖g7 7 f3 0-0 8 ♖d2 ♘c6 9 ♖c4 ♖d7 10 0-0-0 ♖e5 11 ♖b3 ♖a5 12 h4 ♖fc8 13 g4

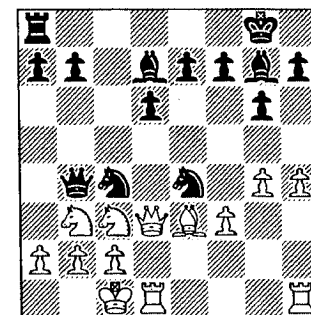


13...b5

Although in *WWTD* I also discussed 13...♘c4 (often leading to similar positions to those we have already covered), this is the move that I am going to concentrate on here. However I would first like to observe that there is also a good deal of mileage in 13...♖c4!?



The threat is simply 14...♖xd4 with the f3-pawn falling to the knight and I have long known that 14 ♖xc4 ♘xc4 15 ♖d3 ♖b4! (rather than the casual 15...b5) certainly gives White a bit of a headache after 16 ♘b3 ♘xe4!.



In fact I remember now that, amazingly, I encountered two enthusiastic juniors while walking to the buffet compartment on a train. They stopped me to ask what was wrong with this and, basically, I just didn't have an answer! Hence I was

prompted to check it out at home and some of my analysis from here runs:

a) 17 ♖xe4? ♖xc3 18 bxc3 ♖a3+ 19 ♖b1 ♖b2 mate (well that was straightforward enough!).

b) 17 fxe4 ♖xc3 18 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 19 bxc3 ♖xe3 and, with ...♖xg4 next-up, Black has a fantastic endgame.

c) 17 ♖d5? ♖xb2+ 18 ♖b1 ♖c3+ 19 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 with a clear advantage.

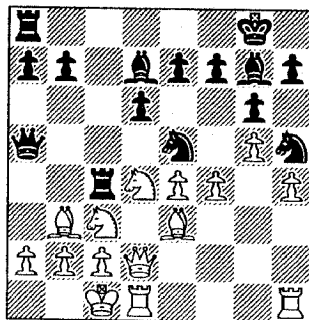
d) 17 ♖d4 ♖xd4 (or likewise 17...♖xc3 18 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 19 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 20 bxc3) 18 ♖xd4 ♖xc3 19 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 20 bxc3 when, as I've intimated on numerous occasions, Black should be happy with an effective positional exchange sacrifice because, along with structural compensation, he already has a pawn in the bag.

e) 17 ♖xe4 ♖xb2!? 18 ♖d5 when each of 18...♖e6, 18...♖xd1, 18...♖c4 and 18...♖a3!? has its merits and causes a lot of confusion in the ranks (files and diagonals!). Alternatively, 18 ♖f1 ♖xd1 19 ♖xd1 ♖a3+, when the fun begins with the white king being forced out into the open. Note, though, not 18 ♖d2? ♖a3 19 ♖b1 ♖c4 20 ♖c1 ♖b2 when White is forced to buy the queen out of trouble with 21 ♖c5.

Naturally I concluded that these were all fascinating lines that should certainly appeal to a Dragon player. However, while I was not unduly worried by the possibility of either 14 ♖d5 or 14 ♖ce2, it did occur to me that 14 g5! must surely be the most testing White response:

Then 14...♖xd4? 15 ♖xd4 ♖xf3 wouldn't be adequate because of 16 ♖f2!, ultimately pressurizing the f7

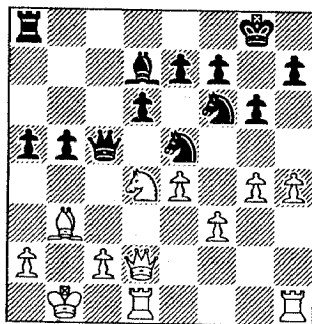
pawn. Hence 14...♖h5 is forced when, after 15 f4, reaching the position below, Black has some decisions to make.



While 15...♖xd4 16 ♖xd4 ♖g4 17 e5 ♖g3 18 ♖he1 ♖f5 19 ♖d5 looks like an important line, Black can also consider 15...♖xc3!? and maybe even 15...♖f3 (!? or ?!).

14 h5

As in our last game the b5-pawn is out of bounds as the f3-pawn hangs. Meanwhile the following instructive encounter shows why 14 ♖h6 is premature: 14...♖xh6 15 ♖xh6 ♖xc3! 16 bxc3 ♖xc3 17 ♖b1 (White had to take time out for this in view of ...♖a1+ winning the knight.) 17...a5 (Black derives benefit from the fact that he has not yet traded his e5-knight for the b3-bishop. With his last move he is hunting down White's guardian of the c2-square.) 18 ♖d2 ♖c5!?



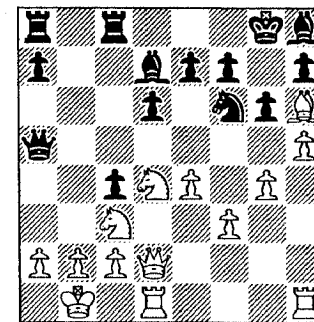
(A queen trade wouldn't be that bad for Black but the text is much more in the spirit of things.) 19 g5 ♖h5 20 f4 ♖c4 (It may seem as though White has now gained a moral advantage but his last couple of moves have seen his e- and f-pawns highlighted as targets.) 21 ♖xc4 bxc4 22 c3 (Played before Black gets this in himself. White remains the exchange up for a pawn but Black's following accurate play shows why it is he who holds the upper hand.) 22...♖a4 23 ♖c1 e5! 24 ♖e2 ♖c6 (The e4-pawn cannot be protected.) 25 ♖a1 ♖xe4 26 ♖he1 ♖d3 27 fxe5 dxe5 28 ♖g1 e4 (Now the light-squared bishop is a permanent thorn.) 29 ♖h3 ♖e8 30 ♖e3 ♖f5 31 ♖f2 ♖f4 32 ♖g1 ♖d5 33 ♖d4 ♖e5 (Black is happy to swap queens now that the white rooks have been starved of any activity.) 34 ♖c5 f5 35 gxh6 ♖xf6 36 ♖e3 ♖d5 37 ♖c5 ♖f4 38 ♖e3 ♖f8 (Surely winning would be 38...♖e2 but even though it seems to me that Black goes a bit awry before achieving victory, that was his own risk!) 39 ♖g5 ♖g7 40 ♖xa5 ♖g2 41 ♖c5 e3 42 ♖g4 (I am a little bemused by the possibility of 42 ♖xd3 cxd3 43 ♖d5+ ♖h8 44 ♖xd3 [and not 44 ♖xg2 d2] but life is full of these little mysteries!) 42...e2 43 ♖a7 ♖xc3+ (The finish is nice though!) 0-1 V.Raineri-M.Cebalo, Milan 2000

14...♖c4 15 ♖xc4 bxc4 16 ♖h6

16 hxg6 is premature as it gives the black king some breathing space. Indeed, not so long ago, 16...fxg6 17 ♖h2 ♖ab8 18 ♖d5 ♖xd5 (Simpler than 18...c3 19 ♖xe7+ ♖f7 20 ♖xc8 which I'm not so sure about.) 19 ♖xh7+ ♖f7 (by the way threatening ...♖h8) 20 ♖h6 ♖xe3 21 ♖xg6+ ♖f8 22 ♖dh1 ♖e5

0-1 A.Incedi-L.Cernousek, Svetla nad Sazavou 1999, looked very convincing.

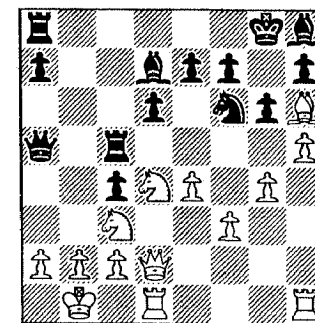
16...♖h8 17 ♖b1



Game 10 deals with the arguably more critical 17 ♖f5!?. Compared to a sub-note (on move 14) of the last game, from White's point of view at least ♖h6 ♖h8 has been interjected. Hence, although it may seem as though he is walking his king into trouble, at least he is threatening 18 ♖d5 with 19 ♖xe7 mate in mind! Black must therefore do something about his queen and it seems likely that the text is more accurate than 17...♖b6.

17...♖c5

Seen not for the first time, this flexible continuation protects the queen and exerts further influence on the fourth rank.



18 ♖a1

Vacating the b1-square to enable the rook to come to the rescue of the b-pawn. As seen in *WSTD*: 18 ♖f5 ♖xf5 19 gxf5 ♖b8 20 hxg6 ffg6 leaves White facing the serious possibility of ...♗xe4 as well as the obvious line-up on the b-file. Then 21 e5 ♖b4 22 ♖a4 ♖xa4 23 exf6 ♖xb2+ 24 ♖c1 c3 25 f7+ ♖xf7 26 ffg6+ ♖e8 0-1 was A.Martin Gonzalez - R.Ravisekhar, Thessaloniki 1984.

18...♖b8 19 ♖b1

This might look very cozy, but White, even though he is not threatened yet, must be very careful not to allow a ...♖xa2+ sacrifice with a rook swinger to deliver mate.

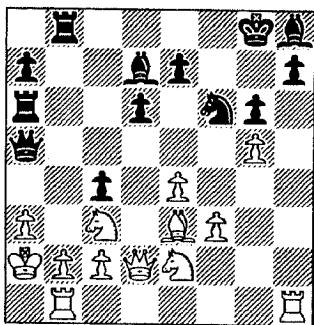
19...♖b4 20 a3 ♖a5 21 ♖a2

The white king is far from safe. He must beware of tactics on all sorts of squares (yes, including a3, b2 and e4).

21...♖b6 22 ♖e3 ♖a6 23 ♖de2 ♖c8 24 hxg6 ffg6 25 g5

25 ♖d5 ♖xd2 26 ♖xd2 ♖xd5 27 exd5 ♖f8 would leave Black and his bishop-pair better off in the endgame.

25...♖b8!

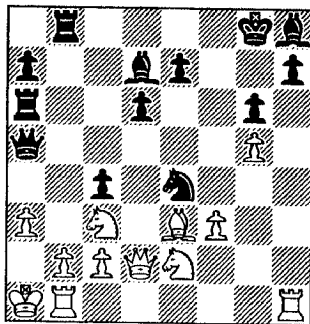


This is what Black has been angling for. Now devastation is threatened in the form of 26...♖xb2+.

26 ♖a1

Preventing that but walking into another bone crusher!

26...♗xe4!! 0-1



Beautiful from here would be either 27 fxe4 ♖xa3+ 28 bxa3 ♖xa3 mate or 27 ♗xe4 with the mate in one, 27...♖xa3.

Game 10

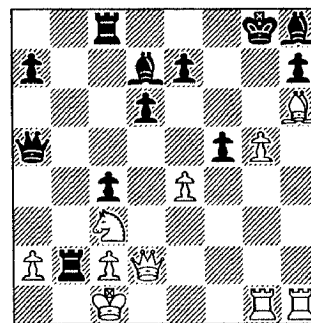
A.Mista White

D.Tan Black

World U18 Championship 2000

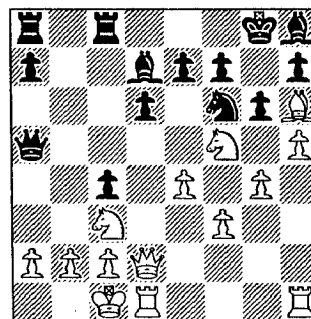
1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 g6 6 ♖e3 ♖g7 7 f3 0-0 8 ♖d2 ♖c6 9 ♖c4 ♖d7 10 0-0-0 ♖a5 11 h4 ♖fc8 12 ♖b3 ♖e5 13 g4 b5 14 h5 ♖c4 15 ♖xc4 bxc4 16 ♖h6

Our previous game took a brief look at the premature 16 hxg6. In a slightly different context, though, I'd like to mention a game that met 16...fxg6 with 17 ♖dg1. With this White tried to make something of the g-file (rather than going straight for h7) but it was too slow and, even without the white king on b1, the b-file proved to be of more importance after 17...♖ab8 18 ♖h6 ♖h8 19 ♖f5 gxf5 20 g5 ♗xe4! 21 fxe4 ♖xb2!



22 g6 (The white queen would be bagged after 22 ♖xb2 ♖xc3+ 23 ♖xc3 ♖b8+.) 22...♖xc3 23 gxf7+ ♖f7 24 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 25 ♖d2 ♖xd2+ 26 ♖xb2 ♖b8+ 27 ♖a3 ♖b4+ 28 ♖b2 ♖c5+ 29 ♖c3 ♖xg1 30 h8=♖ ♖xh8 0-1 M.Olesen-J.Tisdall, Gausdal Arnold Cup 1995.

16...♖h8 17 ♖f5

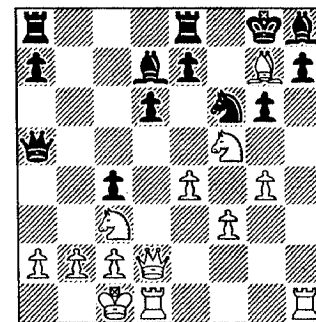


Black was right last go to avoid the trade of bishops as, without an exchange sac available on c3, he would most likely suffer big-time down the h-file. Though mate on h7 is unlikely now, the text is a reminder to Black that his king is a little short of squares. 18 ♗xe7 mate is threatened and 17...gxf5?? isn't possible because of 18 ♖g5+.

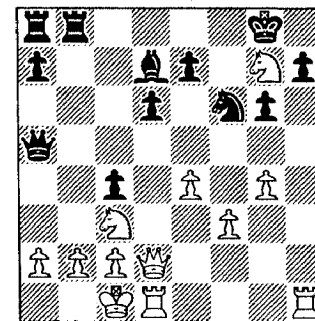
17...♖f5

I remember now that as far back as 1994 while I was coaching the England ladies team at the Moscow

Olympiad, I spent some of my spare time (not that there was much!) analysing 17...♖e8 18 hxg6 ffg6 19 ♖g7!



Although the odd text books (including my own *WSTD*) weren't respectful enough of this continuation, in my own little home analysis world, I soon considered the above to be a key position. After 19...♖xg7 20 ♖xg7 the point is that 20...♖xg7 21 ♖h6+ ♖f7 22 g5 is far too dangerous. However the fun begins with the bizarre move I dreamt up: 20...♖b8!?. It's true that this rook has already covered a lot of ground but the idea was to leave the white knight actually getting in the way of White's attack, while looking for action on the b-file.



Lines like this often balance on a knife-edge and my assessment frequently fluttered between winning for Black and dead lost! A couple of

obvious queen moves were dispensed with:

a) 21 ♖h2 ♜xb2!! 22 ♔f5 (or the likely to transpose 22 ♖xb2 ♜b8+ 23 ♖c1 ♜xc3) 22...♙xf5 23 ♖xb2 ♜b8+ 24 ♖c1 ♜xc3 25 gxf5 ♜b2 26 ♗d2 ♖a3 27 ♗d4 c3 28 ♜c4+ ♖f8 29 ♜c8+ ♔e8 will lead to mate while

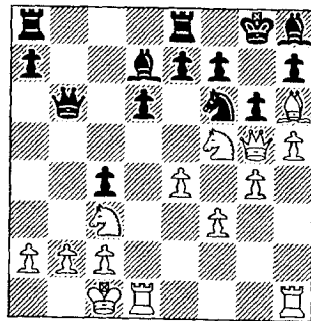
b) 21 ♖h2 ♜xb2! 22 ♖xb2 ♜b8+ 23 ♖c1 ♜xc3 24 g5 ♜e3+ 25 ♗d2 c3 also isn't bad!

However, as the English junior learnt almost exactly a year earlier, the acid test came with

c) 21 g5!. Desmond responded with the not unnatural 21...♜b4 but was crushed after 22 ♜f4! (Not allowing as much counterplay as 22 ♖h2 ♖xb2+ 23 ♔d2 ♜b3!? 24 axb3 cxb3 although Black may be lost there too!) 22...♔h5 23 ♔hx5 gxf5 24 g6! (Opening the black king up like a can of worms.) 24...hxg6 (Capturing on b2 doesn't help.) 25 ♗dgl ♙e8 26 ♜hx5! 1-0 M.Sagafos-D.Tan, World U-16 Championship 1999 (Amongst all else White is threatening a forced mate with 27 ♜h8+ ♖xh8 28 ♜f8+ ♖h7 29 ♜h1). That sort of thing happens to every Dragon player at some time in their chess career but 21 g5! doesn't necessarily spell the end of the road for this line with, for example, 21...♔xe4!? 22 fxe4 ♜e5 23 ♔f5 (or 23 ♗d5+ ♗xd5 24 ♔xd5 ♖xg7 25 ♔c7) 23...gxf5 24 ♗d5+ ♗xd5 25 ♔xd5 ♜e8 26 exf5 ♙xf5 27 ♔c7 perhaps not being completely disastrous endgames for Black.

With no real conclusion (other than the good old ∞) made on my once considered critical position, the next move to enter my thoughts was 18 ♜g5.

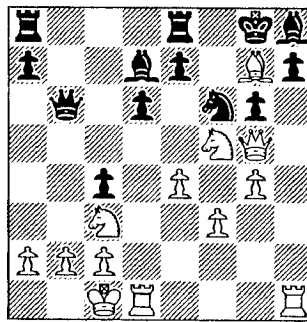
I'm not sure exactly when this was but I remember for certain analysing it the evening before a probable encounter with John Nunn. Well, I say analysing it, but the truth is that I was letting 'Fritz' do most of the work while I was watching a particularly interesting television show. While I was simply looking down to press the space bar occasionally (i.e. to confirm the move it considered best and instructing it to get on with the next one), my laptop computer was providing some pretty promising assessments. I was particularly enthusiastic about a rare timely intervention to save the following variation that appeared to be going belly up! 18...♜b6



19 hxg6 (If 19 e5 then 19...♜ab8! 20 exf6 ♜xb2+ 21 ♔d2 ♙xf6 22 ♜e3 and then 22...gxf5 is a good response.) 19...fxg6 20 ♔xe7+ ♜xe7 21 ♔d5 ♔xd5 22 ♜xd5+ (Fritz loved this for White but, when showed the light, soon changed its tune; a feature which should have set alarm bells ringing in my head!) 22...♜e6 23 ♜xa8+ ♜e8 24 ♗d5+ ♙e6 25 ♜xd6 (or 25 ♜g5 ♙xb2+ 26 ♔d2 ♜f2 mate) 25...♙xb2+ 26 ♖b1 ♜b7 when Black is completely winning.

Actually I got quite excited that I might get this variation and, lo and

behold, the next day things appeared peachy as I bashed out my moves while John pondered the complexities of the position. Suddenly, well behind on the clock, he deviated with the over-the-board inspiration: 20 ♙g7!!



When he unleashed this stunner, it gradually dawned on me just how strong it was. Not really having played an over-the-board move of my own yet, I now used up over an hour on my clock to conclude that I was completely lost! I felt like a real idiot. Sure, especially in the Dragon, a bolt out of the blue can easily prove decisive for either side. However, as you have just read, (and contrary to the view of the watching public) it's not like I wasn't familiar with this concept. On the other hand, Fritz (or any other computer program for that matter) was never likely to suggest it and this, paired with my lazy preparation, was clearly a recipe for disaster.

Essentially it compares favourably with the ♙g7 idea when the queen isn't on g5 and the game continued 20...♙xg7 21 ♔xg7 ♜eb8 (21...♖xg7 is crushed by 22 ♔d5 ♜a5 23 ♖h6+ ♖f7 24 ♔xf6) 22 ♔h5 (Although the ♖b1-style quiet move has always been touted as the way to treat the ...♜a5 variation, it is only in these kinds of lines that

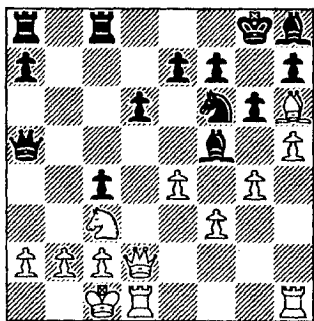
we can fully appreciate how useful it can be for the white king to have an escape square.) 22...♔hx5 (Reiterating my last point, now 22...♜xb2+ 23 ♔d2 ♔hx5 24 gxf5 ♜b6 25 ♖e2! leaves the white king safe and the black king in big trouble.) 23 gxf5 ♙e8 24 b3 (Now Black's major pieces look redundant while their king is devoid of defence.) 24...cxb3 25 axb3 ♜c5 26 ♔d5 (The e7-pawn is just one problem. I felt bitterly disappointed with this encounter as I hadn't really had a chance to get into the game and already the battle is effectively over.) 26...♜b7 27 ♔xe7+ ♜xe7 28 ♜xe7 ♜c8 29 ♜h2 gxf5 30 ♜g2+ ♙g6 31 ♜xd6 ♜e3+ 32 ♜gd2 ♜f8 33 ♜d8 ♜xd8 34 ♜xd8+ ♖g7 35 ♗d4+ ♜xd4 36 ♜xd4 h4 37 ♔d2 h3 38 ♖e3 ♖h6 39 ♖f4 1-0 J.Nunn-C.Ward, 4NCL 1998.

Following on, I notice that 18...♜b4 19 e5 ♜ab8 20 ♙g7 ♙xf5 21 gxf5 ♙xg7 22 hxg6 fxf6 23 fxf6 ♔e4 24 gxf7+ ♖h8 25 fxe4 ♜xb2+ 26 ♔d2 ♙xe5 27 ♜h3 ♜f8 28 ♔e2 ♜f2 29 ♜g1 ♙f4+ 30 ♜xf4 ♜xf4 31 ♜hg3 ♜ff8 32 ♔f4 ♗d4+ 33 ♖c1 ♜xg1+ 0-1 (K.Nicholas-T.Woodward, Kensington 1999) occurred later. However, although after 19 a3 the black queen could retreat to b7 rather than b6 (where as we know it is of course vulnerable to ♔d5), I'm not sure that much is different from my Nunn game. Indeed 19 hxg6 fxf6 20 ♔xe7+ ♜xe7 21 ♔d5 ♔xd5 22 ♜xd5+ ♜e6 23 ♜xa8+ ♜e8 24 ♗d5+ ♙e6 is the same trick as before, but I don't see any obvious reason why 20 ♙g7(!) shouldn't work again.

I think I decided that 18...♜e5!? is a better practical try and, upon mentioning that to my pupil, 19

♖he1 ♖ab8 20 f4 ♗c5 21 e5 dxe5 22 fxe5 ♗b4 23 ♖xe7+ ♗xe7 24 exf6 ♗xe1 25 ♗xe1 ♗xb2+ 26 ♖d2 ♖c6 27 ♗e5 ♗d8+ 28 ♖e3 ♗e8 29 ♗xe8+ ♖xe8 30 ♖d2 ♗b8 31 ♖d5 c3+ 32 ♖d3 ♖b5+ 33 ♖d4 ♗d8 34 ♖c5 ♖xf6 35 ♖xf6+ ♗xf6 36 ♖xb5 ♗b6+ 37 ♖c4 ♗c6+ 38 ♖d3 gxh5 39 g5 ♗d5+ 40 ♖e2 ♗g2+ 0-1 was in fact promptly played in Wood-Tan, Golders Green rapid-play 1998.

If you study these positions (with or without computer assistance), I hope that you will forgive me for not providing you with as many answers as I would have liked. Besides, you might also have taken on board my cleverly disguised advice that you shouldn't just blindly take someone's (or something's!) word for it. Be sure to check carefully all analysis yourself because if you play such lines then it is your head that is on the chopping block. That said, of course, there is a certain thrill in exerting minimum effort and still ending up as the one in possession of the axe!

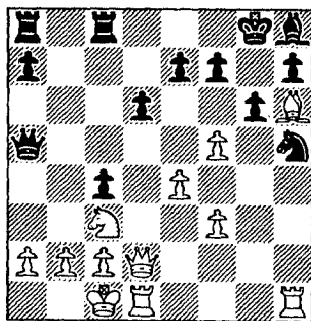


18 gxf5

The advantage of the text move is that White gets the chance to utilize the g-file. Instead 18 exf5 would no doubt elicit other complications when the game could go either way (I've been waiting to say that!).

Indeed, although after 18...♗ab8 19 hxg6 fxg6 20 ♖del ♖c7 21 ♗e3 ♗e5 22 ♗g5 ♗c5 23 ♗e6 ♗b4 24 ♗e3 ♗xb2+ 25 ♖d2 ♗b6 26 fxg6 hxg6 27 ♗xb6 axb6 28 g5 ♖f7 29 ♖he1 ♖g8 30 ♖d5 ♖c5 31 ♖xe7 White managed to go on to win in M. Calzetta Ruiz - L.Cernousek, Olomouc 2000, surely the not played 31...♖e5 (or ...♖xh6 first) should in fact seal things in Black's favour.

18...♖xh5



19 ♖dg1

In fact perhaps this game doesn't belong in this book as 19 ♖xh5 ♖xc3 20 ♗xc3 (20 bxc3? ♗a3+ 21 ♖b1 ♖ab8+ is mating) 20...♗xc3 21 bxc3 gxh5 22 ♖g1+ ♖h8 23 ♖g7+ ♖g8 24 ♖h6+ ♖h8 25 ♖g7+ ♖g8 is a draw by perpetual check!

19...♖ab8!

On 19...♖xc3 20 bxc3 ♗xa2?!, all of a sudden 21 ♗d5! looks way too dangerous.

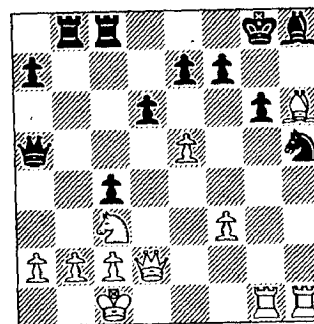
20 fxg6

Note that now 20 ♖xh5 is met by 20...♗b6!, attacking g1 and b2.

20...hxg6

Though proud of this game, young Desmond later conceded that 20...fxg6 could be better. Understandably he was worried that there might be problems along the d5-g8 diagonal.

21 e5

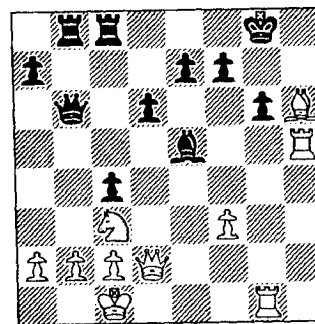


Temporarily reducing the threat against b2 and breaking the connection between the queen and knight. In a familiar story, this continuation wins a piece, but at the cost of several pawns.

21...♖xe5

Though it was a lot to see, actually 21...♗b4!? 22 ♗e3 ♗xb2+ 23 ♖d2 dxe5! (played to open the d-file) 24 ♖xh5 ♗d8+ 25 ♖e1 ♗xc2 puts forward a convincing argument as an improved mode of play.

22 ♖xh5 ♗b6



23 ♖hh1

It looks as though White's best practical chance would have been 23 ♖xg6+! fxg6 24 ♗d5+ ♖h8 25 ♖e3+ gxh5 26 ♖xb6 ♖xb6 27 ♗f7. Materially speaking, Black stands well but things are unclear as his pieces are not well coordinated and are a long way from their king.

23...♗xb2+ 24 ♖d1 e6!

Preventing the check that would have caused severe grief in the event of 24...♗xc3? 25 ♖xg6+! fxg6 (or 25...♖h7 26 ♖f8+ ♖xg6 27 ♗h6+ ♖f5 28 ♖h5 mate) 26 ♗d5+ e6 27 ♗xe6+ ♖h7 28 ♖f8+.

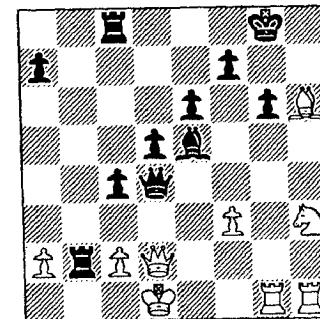
25 ♖e4 d5

White has his extra piece but Black has a beautiful and pretty much impenetrable wall of pawns—and an attack to boot.

26 ♖g5 ♗d4!

If White swaps off queens, Black will not get mated and will almost certainly win the a2 pawn.

27 ♖h3 ♖b2!



Cool. There is no need to hurry. Black will trade queens on his own terms and now sets about exploring the seventh rank.

28 ♖f4 ♖g7 29 a3 ♖a2 30 ♖d6 ♗b6!?

A change of plan! Black has also re-fianchettoed his bishop, making his own king extremely safe, and, with the white monarch looking a bit ropery, he decides to keep the queens on after all. 30...♗b2 also looked good.

31 ♖b4 c3 32 ♗f4 a5 33 ♖g5 ♗d4+

Now the queens must come off and, together with this, Black wins material.

34 ♗xd4 ♖xd4 35 ♖e7 ♖a1+ 0-1

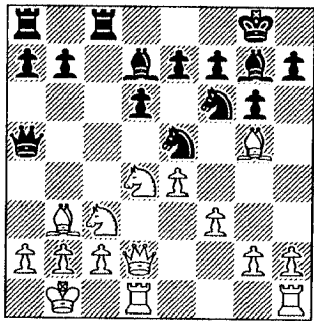
Game 11

A. Schekachev White

C. Ward Black

Gran Canaria Open 1993

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 g6 6 ♖e3 ♖g7 7 f3 ♗c6 8 ♖d2 0-0 9 ♖c4 ♖d7 10 0-0-0 ♖a5 11 ♗b1 ♖fc8 12 ♖b3 ♗e5 13 ♖g5



A positional approach that I occasionally see recommended, though, as far as I can make out, with little justification. Essentially White ditches plans for a serious attack in favour of trying to reach a good endgame. Not presumably what the Yugoslav Attack was intended for, but if that's the way that White wants to play then so be it! The just-moved dark-squared bishop pressurises the e7-pawn which could be useful if he can ever arrange f4 and e5. However, the truth is that White also has a more mundane sequence in mind. In an ideal world he will simply swap on f6 and then recover the bishop for knight deficit by ♗d5xf6. If he can achieve this—involving a queen trade and a Black ...exf6 recapture—then, granted, he would stand comfortably better. Rest assured, though, that sort of idealistic simplicity isn't going to occur in a month of Sundays!

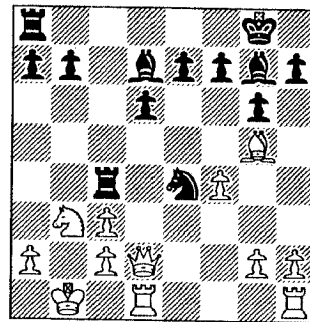
I didn't have much to say about 13 ♖e2 in *WSTD* and in fact I still don't! The move usefully controls c4 but significantly reduces his attacking options. If Black is ever considering an exchange sac on c3, he should bear in mind the sneaky ♖d2 and should probably choose between the pawn sacrifice 13...b5 or, first, the slower 13...a6. More typically, of course, there is no time for the latter quiet move but 13 ♖e2 changes the face of the whole position.

13...♖c5!?

Seen not for the first time, this flexible continuation keeps the tension and offers support to the fourth rank and possibilities of doubling on the c-file.

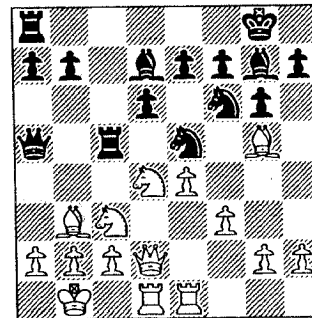
14 ♖he1

This move, offering some protection to the e-pawn, shows that White has no intention of taking the usual route down the h-file. The need for it is well illustrated after 14 f4 ♗c4 (Actually, 14...♗c6 and 14...♗eg4 are both worthy of consideration.) 15 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 16 ♗b3 ♖xc3!! 17 bxc3 ♗xe4



This is a position I've had before and it is extremely good fun for Black. Though currently a queen down for a piece (well ... and a pawn!), Black will zap the c3-pawn,

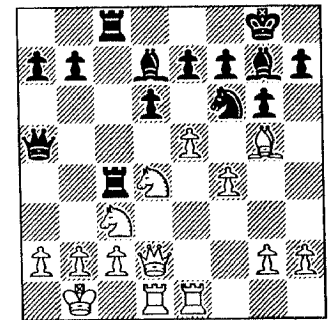
the a2-pawn and, with all of his pieces getting in on the act, in all likelihood the c2-pawn too. Important to note is that White's uninspired approach of 14 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 15 ♗d5 ♖xd2 16 ♗xf6+ is foiled by 16...♖g7! and, if White continues trying to elicit a doubling of Black's pawns by 17 ♗h5+, then 17...♖h6! 18 ♖xd2 ♖xh5 is consistent. Provided they don't get mated in the open, kings are of course very useful in endgames and, though I would hardly suggest it as being forced, the following encounter shows an unusually excessive amount of legwork by the black monarch: 19 ♗e2 ♖h6 20 ♗f4 ♖g7 21 ♗d5 ♖f8 22 ♖hd1 ♗c4 23 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 24 e5 dxe5 25 ♗b6 axb6 26 ♖xd7 ♖ac8 27 ♖d8+ ♖xd8 28 ♖xd8+ ♖g7 29 c3 e4 30 ♖d7 exf3 31 gxf3 ♖h4 32 ♖xb7 ♖xh2 33 ♖xb6 h5 34 a4 h4 35 ♖b4 g5 36 ♖g4 ♖g6 37 a5 h3 38 ♖a2 ♖g2 39 ♖a4 h2 40 a6 h1=♖ 41 a7 ♖c1 42 ♖a6+ ♖g7 43 ♖b6 ♖g1 0-1 J. Cuadras Avellana - A. Martin Gonzalez, 1974.



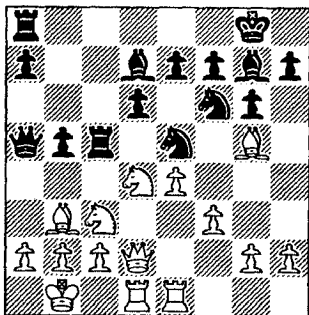
14...b5!?

Thanks to Black's last move, this pawn is not *en prise* to 15 ♗cxb5. Also notice how Black has retained the tension by delaying ...♗c4. Now with ...bxc4 a future option, the

covering move ♗b3 (after the b3-bishop for e5-knight trade) is unlikely to be available to White. Though I see no reason to be unhappy with the text, my view, based on current material, is that 14...♖ac8 has been given unjustifiably bad press, e.g. 15 f4 ♗c4 (Admittedly 15...♗eg4?! 16 h3! h6 17 hxg4 hxg5 18 f5 is annoyingly awkward for Black, despite retaining his Dragon bishop and having good control over e5.) 16 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 17 ♖xf6 (Essentially then, I disagree that this offers White much of an advantage and suggest that White must instead turn to the complications of 17 e5!?

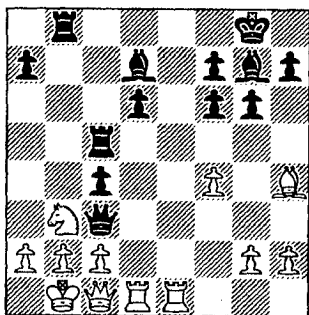


when both 17...♗e8 and 17...♖c3 would have to be considered.) 17...♖xf6 18 ♗d5 ♖xd2 19 ♗xf6+ ♖g7 20 ♖xd2 (or as we've seen before, 20 ♗h5+ ♖h6! 21 ♖xd2 ♖xh5) 20...♖xf6 21 e5+ dxe5 22 fxe5+ ♖g7. Presumably, now White's only real try is 23 e6 but I feel that 23...fxe6 24 ♗xe6+ ♖xe6 25 ♖xe6 is a little deceptive. First impressions are that White is a little better because he has the superior pawn structure. However, the more one looks at Black's passed centre pawn and centralised king, the more negligible this edge becomes. Besides, all rook and pawn endings are drawn!



15 ♘xf6

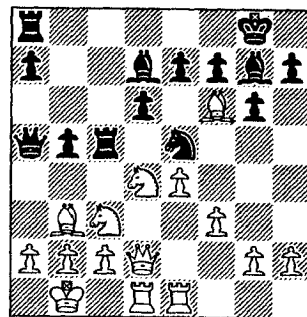
I certainly remember in *WSTD* giving the game Sievers-Ward, Guildford Masters 1991, which continued instead with 15 f4 ♘c4 16 ♘xc4 bxc4 17 e5 ♖b8 (Also of interest is the 17...dxe5 18 fxe5 ♖xe5 19 ♘f3 ♖xe1 20 ♗xe1 ♘g4 21 ♘xf6 ♘xf6 22 ♘d5 ♗xe1 23 ♘xf6+ ♖g7 24 ♖xe1 ♘xf6 25 ♘e5 ♘e6 of D.Langner-J.Yoos, 1996, when Black had no problems in winning the endgame.) 18 exf6 exf6 19 ♘h4 ♗b4 20 ♗c1 ♗xc3 21 ♘b3



21...cxb3!! 22 bxc3 bxa2+ 23 ♗xa2 ♖a5+ 24 ♗a3 ♘e6+ 25 ♖xe6 ♖xa3+ 26 ♘xa3 fxe6 and I converted the endgame of this thoroughly enjoyable encounter.

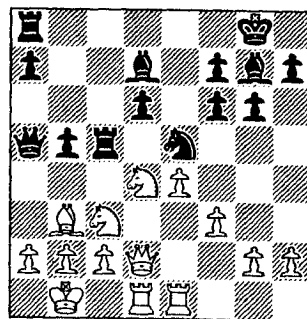
Hardly worthy of a mention is 15 ♘d5 ♗xd2 16 ♖xd2 ♘xd5 17 ♘d5 ♘c4 18 ♖d3 ♖e8 which

leaves Black with a very pleasant game.



15...exf6!?

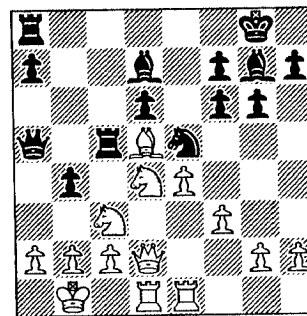
15...exf6 16 ♘d5 ♗xd2 17 ♖xd2 (or 17 ♘xf6+ ♖g7 18 ♖xd2 ♘xf6 transposing) 17...♖g7 18 ♘xf6 ♘xf6 19 f4 ♘c4 20 ♘xc4 ♖xc4 21 e5+ dxe5 22 fxe5+ ♖g7 23 e6 fxe6 24 ♘xe6+ ♘xe6 25 ♖xe6 is worse for Black than the very similar previously discussed endgame, since having the a-rook on c8 is more useful than the detrimental pawn on b5. Nevertheless, though more of a struggle, I would have thought that Black was favourite to hold the draw. The text, of course, is rather more ambitious. White achieves the crippling of the pawn structure that he was after but Black retains his favourite bishop. The d6-pawn is obviously weak but White can't attack it with his major pieces and at the same time occupy the d5-square.



16 ♘d5

16 ♘d5 ♗d8 17 f4 is perhaps more critical when Black has a potentially dominant (in the absence of its enemy counterpart) Dragon bishop to compensate him for his weak d-pawn. Logically, White should try to shut this out by getting his own pawn to f5 before Black, but 17...a5!? exploits the frailties of his own bishop. Now 18 fxe5 fxe5 19 c3 a4 20 ♘c2 exd4 21 cxd4 ♖c4 is very good for Black and thus 18 a3 may be necessary, when the position remains unstable.

16...b4!



17 ♘ce2

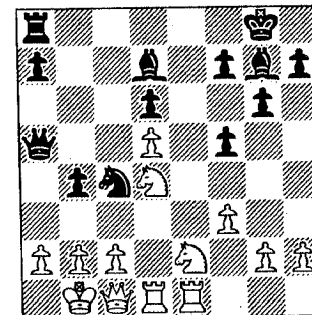
17 ♘xa8 bxc3 18 ♗e3 ♗b4 19 ♘b3 ♘c4 20 bxc3 ♘a3+ 21 ♖b2 f5! is one reason why taking the rook wasn't appealing!

17...♘c4 18 ♗c1

18 ♘xc4 ♖xc4 19 ♘b3 nets the d-pawn but Black has the bishop-pair on an open board. His own king is safely tucked away and he can consider thrusting his a-pawn well into enemy territory in order to intimidate the opposing monarch and the defending knights.

18...♖xd5 19 exd5 f5

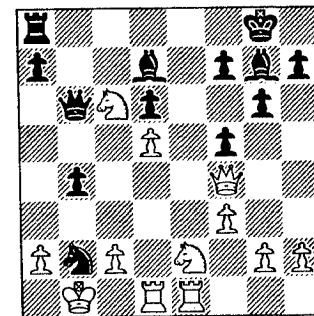
Black has sacrificed the exchange but his now opened-up Dragon bishop operates in perfect harmony with the knight.



20 ♗f4 ♗b6

Despite the material deficit, Black is in no real hurry. While the white knights are in a tangle, Black has all of the key squares covered and can seriously consider a plan of ...a5-a4 and ...b3.

21 ♘c6 ♘xb2 1/2-1/2

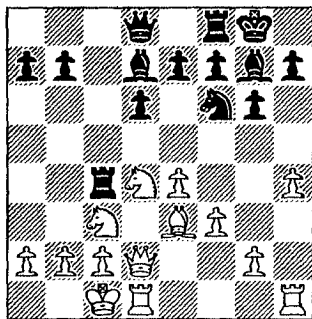


Alas, I'm afraid that this is a very tame finish to the game, but, as you know, I'm very good at excuses. Perhaps I hadn't quite appreciated just how much better Black's position is, e.g. 22 ♗xd6 (Perhaps White must try the visually unattractive 22 ♖d4.) 22...♘xd1 23 ♖xd1 (or 23 ♗xd7 ♘c3+) 23...♘xc6 24 dxc6 ♖c8.

However, as I recall, a draw gave me a great final tournament placing and, in a rare example of copping out, the game was halted

prematurely. Sorry about that, but anyway a chapter can only take so much excitement!

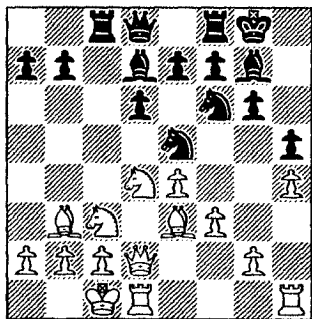
In *WWTD* I included a second system that is characterized by the following position:



Typically, this is reached by the move order:

1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 g6 6 ♖e3 ♖g7 7 f3 ♗c6 8 ♗d2 0-0 9 ♖c4 ♖d7 10 0-0-0 ♠c8 11 ♖b3 ♗e5 12 h4 ♗c4 13 ♖xc4 ♠xc4

and if we substitute 12...♗c4 with 12...h5 (stopping White's h-pawn in its tracks) then in the 'Soltis' variation we see:

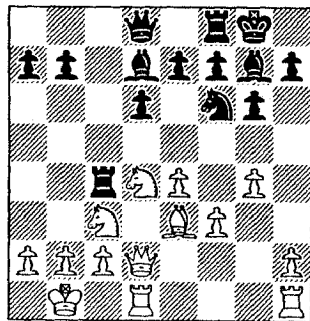


Sure, there are other lines available to Black (e.g. with ...♗c7, ...♗b8 or an early ...♗d7) but these three (i.e. including the one covered

in the illustrative games) represent the main ones. I guess that I have matured over the years since my original view was of Black having to attack quickly before his own king was mated. That is why I was so enthusiastic about bringing the black queen into action, but I do confess that my outlook has altered a little. I now appreciate the defensive qualities of the Dragon more and concede that moving a pawn around one's own king, as above, is not as ridiculous as it may first appear. As White inevitably has to attempt g2-g4 to make any serious progress, there are often mass complications with Black frequently bagging a few pawns. Indeed, both of the main lines with ...♠c8 continue to stand firm.

What I have noticed, though, is the recent trend of White players sidestepping all of the old theory with the waiting move 12 ♖b1. Then obviously 12...h5 looks a little odd (but will no doubt be tried by someone, somewhere at some time!) and so 12...♗c4 13 ♖xc4 ♠xc4 has frequently occurred with 14 g4 (dissuading ...h5) the popular follow up.

Indeed, it strikes me that the following position is one which has become critical, although not of course in the ...♗a5 lines that I have advocated in this chapter.



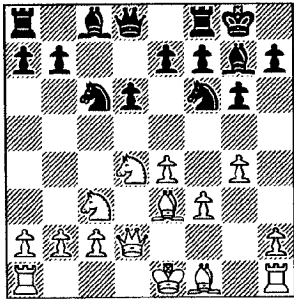
However this recipe does cover White in both of the popular ...♠c8 lines by essentially removing the with/out ...h5 differentiation. By including both ♖b1 and g4, White maintains some control in the centre while certainly not ruling out the possibility of a traditional h4-h5-style attack.

There are plenty of plans available to Black but there is no doubt that this simple system is proving to

be a tough nut to crack. It has proved to be a very popular talking point on my more casual www.chesspublishing.com Sicilian Dragons website but of course that isn't relevant here. You might have to wait a while and, perhaps, by then things may have changed, but for a more in-depth printed coverage, look out for 'Winning with the Sicilian Dragon 3'

6 Yugoslav Attack 9 g4

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♖e3 ♖g7 7 f3 ♘c6 8 ♗d2 0-0 9 g4



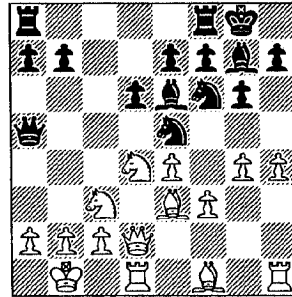
Although g2-g4 isn't always necessary to mastermind a successful kingside attack (it is occasionally possible to go it alone with the h-pawn), White's 9th move certainly appears to open up offensive avenues. It also makes available g4-g5 to kick away the black knight. This isn't sufficient in itself to gain clear access to h7 (as the knight usually slides to h5) but it does reduce Black's grip on d5.

On the downside, though, (the upside for Black!) there are plenty of circumstances in which this advance can be deemed detrimental. Yes, later you will even see the black king invading the f4-square in an ending but, from the above diagram, more apparent are the tactical sacrifices that are in the offing (though not advocated here, 9...♗xg4 was

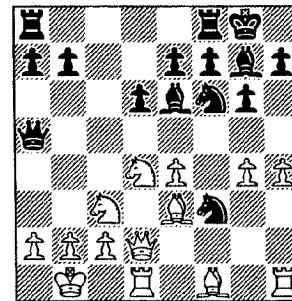
popular for a while) due to the weakening of the f-pawn.

Hopefully, like myself, some readers of *WWTD* will have had the opportunity to execute the following tactic:

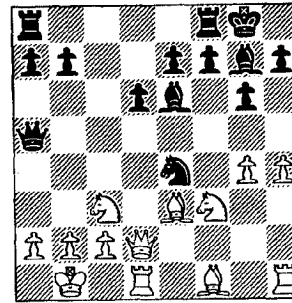
1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♖e3 ♖g7 7 f3 ♘c6 8 ♗d2 0-0 9 g4 ♗e6 10 0-0-0 ♘e5 11 h4 ♗a5 12 ♖b1



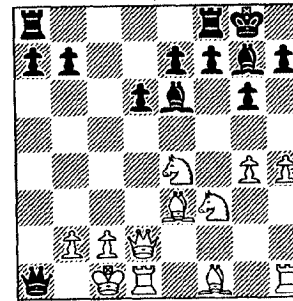
12...♗xf3!



13 ♗xf3 ♗xe4!

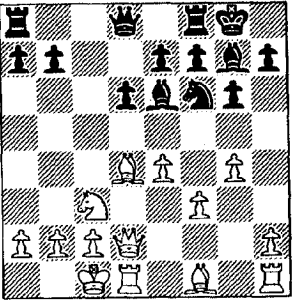


14 ♗xe4 ♗xa2+ 15 ♖c1 ♗a1 mate

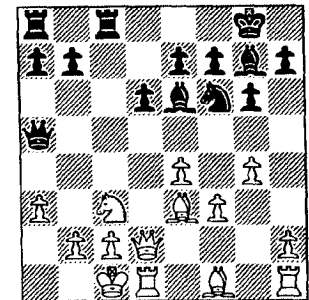


It's a nice feeling to win games like that (even if it wasn't all your idea!) and I must confess to having a soft spot for that still very playable system (9...♗e6 and 10...♘e5) against 9 g4. Nevertheless this is a new book and I wanted to introduce some other lines instead.

My main recommendation for Black here (and as also seen in *WWTD*) is the trade of knights in the centre followed by the swift posting of the bishop on e6. However, generally speaking, having no fear of 10 ♗xe6, my suggestion in *WWTD* was 9...♗e6. I start the chapter with a not so theoretical demonstration of how miniatures are still possible.



It is not uncommon to see this move-order which, though effectively transposing into a 9 g4 variation, did originally start off as a 9 0-0-0. Essentially White eschews the chance to get in the move ♖b1 for free, i.e. as has already been mentioned and will be explained further in the next chapter, 11 ♖b1 prevents 11...♗a5 because of 12 ♗d5 (there is an intermezzo check on e7) and so Black loses a tempo with ...♗c7, ...♗f8 and then ...♗a5 11...♗a5 12 a3 ♗f8 13 ♗e3?



Game 1
T.Seeman White
R.Molander Black
Jyvaskyla Open 2000

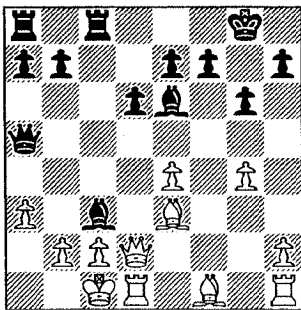
1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♖e3 ♖g7 7 f3 0-0 8 ♗d2 ♘c6 9 0-0-0 ♗xd4 10 ♗xd4 ♗e6 11 g4

Yes, okay, this is a rather convenient move from Black's point of view and I can't really explain what on earth was going through White's mind when he played it. However it illustrates my point well and so you won't see me complaining! Of course this is just a starting point for the whole variation (i.e. before ♗e3) and you will find more on the likes of 13 h4 or 13 ♖b1 shortly.

13...♗xg4!! 14 fxg4

Rather playing into Black's hands. However after, say, 14 ♗d4 ♗xd4 15 ♖xd4 ♖xc3 16 fxg4 ♖c5 White would have lost a clear pawn and, with an inferior structure too, would only have been in line for more suffering.

14...♗xc3 0-1

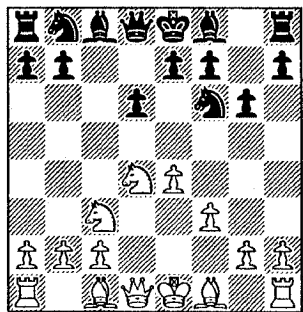


The only way to avoid losing a piece is 15 bxc3 and that would perish to 15...♖xa3+ 16 ♖b1 ♖a2+ 17 ♖c1 ♖a1 mate.

Game 2

M.Mrdja White
E.Szylav Black
Cannes 1999

1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 g6 6 f3



I notice that there is always the occasional person that plays 6 f3 rather than 6 ♗e3, even though their dark-squared bishop is destined for that square and 6...♗g4? would drop material to 7 ♗b5+. As far as I can make out there is no reason for this move-order but, then again, there is no clear way for Black to punish it. Rarely does anything other than a direct transposition occur.

6...♗c6 7 ♗e3

Note that 7 ♗b3 will at best offer White a Classical, where he has played an unnecessary f3.

7...♗g7 8 ♖d2 0-0 9 g4 ♗e6

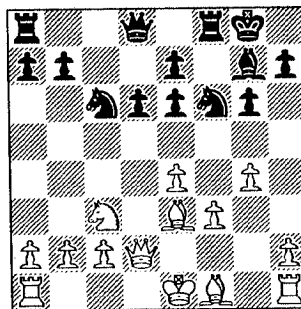
Although the majority of games in this chapter show this bishop unafraid of the knight, equally playable is 9...♗xd4 10 ♗xd4 ♗e6 which still fits in with this Black system. Having played over this and the following game, readers should make up their own minds as to which road to travel (both most likely to lead to somewhere near Rome anyhow!).

10 ♗xe6

I always used to think that this trade could only really be a good idea for White if his pawn were back on g2. Although it gains a bishop for a knight, the newly

arrived pawn on e6 helps to control d5 and, with Black being gifted a half-open f-file, the f-pawn is an obvious target. As regards the black king position, the f7-square could actually be a handy flight square, although one must concede that the downside is that the g6-pawn has been weakened.

10...fxe6



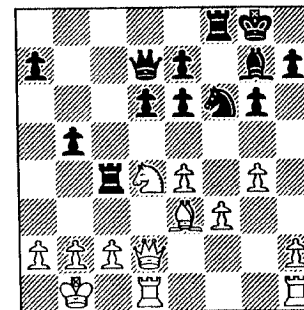
11 0-0-0

Very natural and arguably worse is 11 ♗c4?!. Then 11...♖c8 adequately defends the e6-pawn but also interesting is 11...d5!? 12 exd5 ♗e5 (the vulnerability of White's f-pawn is well illustrated here!) 13 ♗e2 ♗xd5 14 ♗xd5 (White would rather not help iron out White's pawns, but there was too much pressure on c3 and e3.) 14...exd5 15 0-0-0 e6. White has the two bishops, but Black's remaining pieces are active and work rather well together.

11...♖c8

After 11...♗e5 12 ♗e2 ♖c8 (alternatively 12...♖c8 could be considered) one fantasy variation might run: 13 ♗b5 ♖d7 14 ♗d4 (admittedly a cozy square for the white knight which is no longer vulnerable to an exchange sac on c3 and now simultaneously attacks e6 and

defends f3) 14...♗c4 15 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 16 ♖b1 b5!?



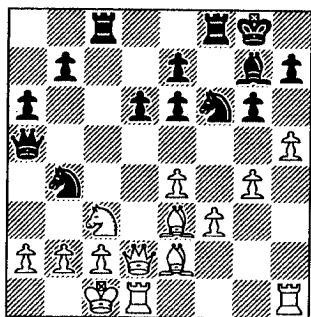
Not yet committing the f-rook as it is useful where it is and should White want to dabble in c3, then, with ...b4 in mind, it may be better placed on b8 than c8. 17 h4 b4 18 h5 ♖fc8 19 hxg6 hxg6 20 ♖c1 (the threat was 20...e5 and 21...♖xc2) 20...a5 21 ♗h6 ♗h8 (holding back on any 21...♗e4 tricks which wouldn't work here because of 22 fxe4 ♗xd4 23 ♖g5; this crushing attack should serve as a warning to Black) 22 ♖g5 ♖f7. With White's knight currently *en prise* there is no obvious way to breach the black king position. Meanwhile, though perhaps not devastatingly quick, moves such as ...a4 and ...b3 do provide Black with a clear plan.

12 ♗e2 a6

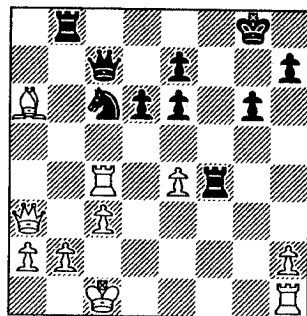
Played here in preference to 12...♗e5. Though slow looking, Black is merely ensuring that White doesn't manage to relocate his knight on d4.

13 f4

13 h4 may seem more logical but what's clear is that after 13...♖a5 14 h5, suddenly, out of the blue, 14...♗b4!



21 ♖xa6 ♘c6 22 ♜c4
22 ♙xc8 ♘xd4 23 ♜a6 ♜f8 24
♜d1 ♘b3+ 25 axb3 ♜xc8 was
White's last chance to obtain a ten-
able endgame.
22...♜b8



White has two connected passed
pawns on the queenside and a tem-
porary pin on the c-file. Neverthe-
less his bishop is in a bit of a tight
squeeze, he has weak pawns else-
where and his king is in far more
danger than its opposite number.

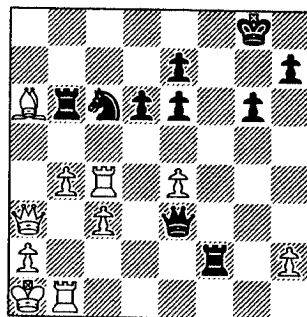
23 ♜d1 ♜b6

...♜f2 could have been played last
go and certainly seems likely to ap-
pear on the next turn.

24 b4 ♜e3+ 25 ♘b2 ♜f2+

The paralysing 25...♜e2+ 26 ♘c1
♜f2 looked even stronger.

26 ♘a1 ♜b6 27 ♜b1



27...d5

... is extremely powerful. In fact
there are too many threats to deal
with on such squares as a2, c3 and
e4 for White to deal with, e.g. 15 a3
(or 15 ♘b1 ♘xe4!! 16 fxg4 ♙xc3
with ...♜xa2+ to follow) 15...♜xc3
16 axb4 (or 16 ♜xc3 ♘a2+) 16...
♜a1 mate.

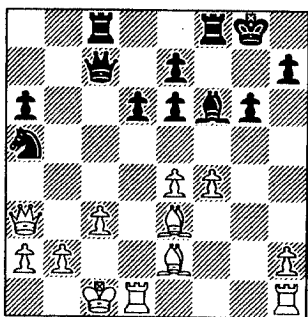
13...b5 14 g5 h4!? 15 gxf6 bxc3
16 ♜xc3 ♙xf6 17 ♜a3

17 ♜b3 pressurises the e-pawn
but obviously asks for trouble on
the b-file.

17...♜c7

Angling for a ...♜xc2 mate!

18 c3 ♘a5!



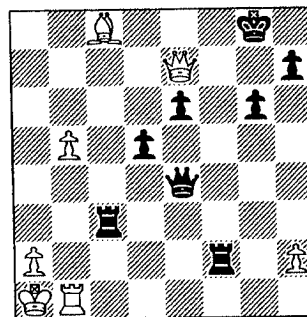
A typical continuation which sees
Black homing in on the c4-square.
Now White must also be wary of the
possibility of a future ...♙xc3.

19 ♙d4 ♙xd4 20 ♜xd4 ♜f4

Probably only now is it really
clear that Black is better.

Taking full advantage of the awk-
wardly placed c4-rook but, alas, at
the same time missing the delightful
27...♘d4! (the c-pawn is pinned) 28
♜xd4 ♙xa6! 29 ♜xa6 ♜xc3+ 30
♜b2 ♜xb2 mate.

28 ♜xc6 ♜xc6 29 b5 ♜xc3 30
♜xc7 ♜xe4 31 ♙c8



31...♜e3 0-1

Black has all spite checks covered
and so forces White to resign. Of
course, 31...♜xa2+ 32 ♘xa2 ♜a4+
33 ♘b2 ♜c2 mate wasn't to be
sniffed at either!

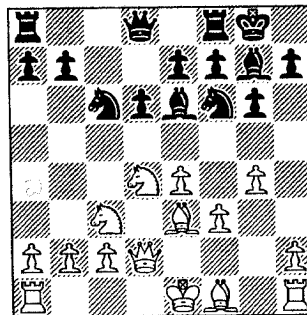
Game 3

J.Ramalho White

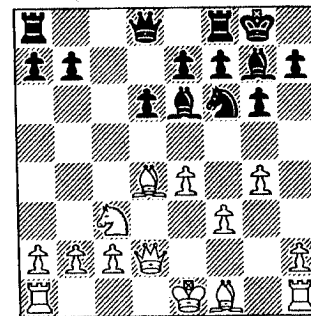
R.Guimaraes Black

Portuguese Championship 1999

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4
♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 f3 ♙g7 7
♙e3 0-0 8 ♜d2 ♘c6 9 g4 ♙e6



If, for some reason, you were put
off by all that 10 ♘xe6 funny busi-
ness of the last game then you could
always side-step it by 9...♘xd4 10
♙xd4 ♙e6.



Then 11 0-0-0 would simply
transpose, while there are two other
continuations of independent sig-
nificance. Firstly, with 11 h4 ♜a5
12 h5, White hopes to launch a suc-
cessful assault on the enemy king
without having to 'waste' time cas-
tling. Certainly an interesting view-
point but also probably an overly
optimistic one. 12...♜fc8 13 a3
(Other than making 0-0-0 a viable
future option because the a2-pawn
wouldn't be *en prise*, there is a
sneaky idea behind this move. Were
Black to hit out prematurely with
...b5, then the unexpected b4! makes
♘xb5 safer.) 13...♜ab8 14 hxg6
hxg6. Now the only justification
that I can really see for this system
is if White now castles long and
claims to have transposed into a fa-
vourable line after 15...b5 16 ♜g5!
(for a further explanation see Game
5). However, practical examples
seem to uncover things like 15 ♜h2
a6 (Showing contempt for White's
attack and craftily sidestepping
15...b5?! 16 b4! ♜c7 [or 16...♜a6
17 a4!]) 17 ♘xb5.) 16 0-0-0 b5 17
♘d5 ♜xd2 18 ♜xd2 ♙xd5 19

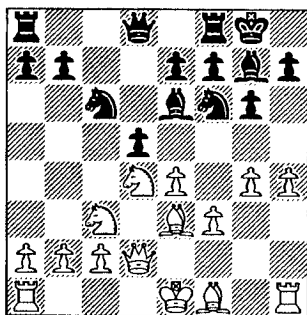
♙xf6?! (we all know that in the Dragon it is the dark-squared bishop that tends to be the more dominant of the two) 19...♙xf6 20 ♖xd5 ♙e5 21 ♖h1 ♖g7 22 ♙e2 ♖f6 23 c3 e6 24 ♖dd1 a5 25 ♖b1 with the better game for Black and eventually 0-1 in J.Egoroff-G.Vescovi, Pouso Alegre 1997.

Secondly, 11 ♖d5 seeks to reduce the scope of the black queen. At least it is prevented from advancing to a5 but 11...♙xd5 12 exd5 ♖c7 13 h4 ♖ac8 looks very playable. White cannot defend c2 with 14 0-0-0 as the mate threat enables 14...♖xd5!. Hence 14 ♖h2 is normal when just one (there are others too) possibility 14...h5!? is yet to be refuted.

10 h4

There is no wimping out now with 10 ♖d5 as it simply drops a pawn by 10...♙xd5 11 exd5 ♖xd5.

10...d5!

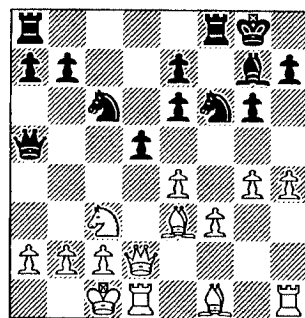


Aiming to show that White's wing play is premature with the traditional remedy: a reaction in the centre.

11 ♖xe6

After 11 h5 ♖xd4! 12 ♙xd4 dxe4, White's own king will start to feel a tad drafty.

11...fxe6 12 0-0-0 ♖a5

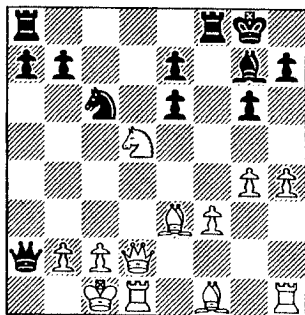


The aggressive move that we all like to see, although, to be fair, probably 12...d4 13 ♙xd4 ♖xd4 14 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 15 ♖xd4 ♖xg4 16 ♖d7 ♖f2 17 ♖g1 ♙xc3 18 bxc3 ♖xf3 is okay too.

13 exd5

On the one hand it still looks wrong to provide Black's pieces with access to the white king's position but, on the other, White is still haunted by 13 h5 d4! 14 ♙xd4 ♖ad8. The pin looks lethal and unfortunately for White the tactic of 15 h6 ♙h8 (15...♖xe4 also looks very possible) 16 ♙c4 ♖xd4 17 ♖xd4 doesn't quite work because of 17...♖xd4 18 ♙xc6+ ♖f7 19 ♖xd4 ♖b6!.

13...♖xd5 14 ♖xd5 ♖xa2!



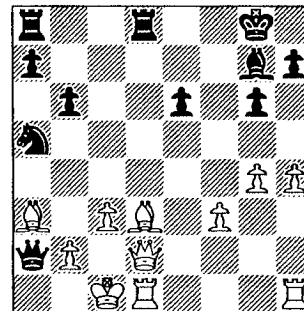
Faced with a few mates here and there, White cannot now retain his

extra piece and stop the threats by 15 ♖c3 because of 15...♖a1+ 16 ♖b1 ♖xb2 mate.

15 ♖xe7+ ♖xe7 16 c3 ♖c6

16...♖d5 must have been tempting too!

17 ♙c5 ♖fd8 18 ♙d3 b6 19 ♙a3 ♖a5!

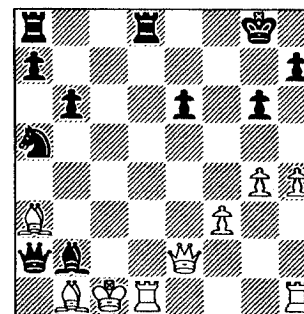


To his credit, Black always knew where he wanted his knight and if White didn't know before that there was a gaping hole on b3, he does now!

20 ♖e2 ♙xc3!

As super-GM Jon Speelman would say, "Splat!"

21 ♙b1 ♙xb2+!



"Krunch!"

22 ♖xb2

The white king also remains devoid of shelter after 22 ♙xb2 ♖ac8+.

22...♖b3+

"Zonk!"

23 ♖xb3

And that folks is effectively the end of a most entertaining show. Obviously 23 ♖c2 ♖ac8+ was no better.

23...♖xb3 24 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 25 ♙e7 ♖c3+ 26 ♙c2 ♖d2 0-1

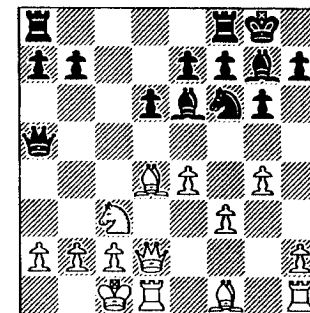
Game 4

Y.Penas Hernandez White

J.Alonso Moyano Black

Paretana 1999

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 g6 6 f3 ♙g7 7 ♙e3 0-0 8 ♖d2 ♖c6 9 g4 ♙e6 10 0-0-0 ♖xd4 11 ♙xd4 ♖a5



12 ♖b1

In the present position, I've always found this 'quiet' move to be a little strange as White soon has to play a3 anyway. After playing both these moves, at the expense of two tempi, White must seek an endgame otherwise ...b5-b4 with a rook on b8 would almost certainly be devastating. The queens should come off by ♖d5, so why has the king been decentralised? The only real plus is that it avoids any threats from ...♙h6, but, of course, h4 would stop that anyway.

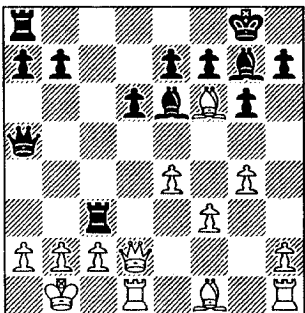
12...♖fc8

Despite my previous comments, Black must take care to avoid Qd5 (with the Qxe7+ intermezzo).

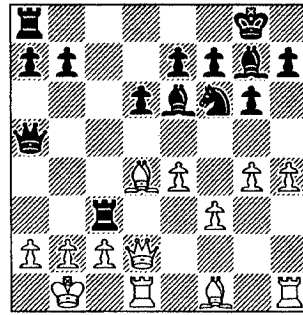
13 h4?

Oops, he didn't play 13 a3 which is the only good move and which occurred in an historic encounter: 13... Ab8 14 Qd5 Wxd2 15 Bxd2 Qxd5 16 Qxg7 Qe3 1/2-1/2 V.Anand-G.Kasparov, New York 1995. Don't ask me why, but I had a sneaking suspicion that the then World Champion would employ this opening when defending his title, and he did! Actually 15... Qxd5 , mixing things up, is more ambitious for Black and I thought that theory gave White an edge the Kasparov way. Obviously though, not a sufficient one to prevent the shell-shocked challenger from shaking hands!

However, the immediate 13 Qd5 is possible, then 13... Wxd2 14 Qxf6+ Qxf6 15 Bxd2 Qxd4 16 Bxd4 Bc5 17 Bb4 b6 18 Qd3 Qg7 19 h4 h6 20 Bg1 g5 21 h5 Qf6 22 Bb5 Bac8 23 Bxc5 Bxc5 24 c3 Qe5 25 Bc1 Qf4 of A.Chatte-V.Moret, 1997, shows White's position to be not that great (at least not on the dark-squares!). However 13 Qxf6? , hoping for, well not much, with 13... Qxf6 14 Qd5 Wxd2 15 Qxf6+ Qg7! (so White doesn't get to shatter Black's pawns), is in fact flattened by 13... Bxc3!

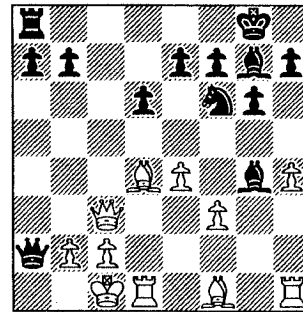


14 Wxc3 Wxa2+ 15 Qc1 Qxf6 16 Wa3 Qg5+ .
13... Bxc3!



Seems familiar? White's chosen method of recapture is the only one that avoids mate in two but there are other tactics looming.

14 Wxc3 Wxa2+ 15 Qc1 Qxg4!



Yes, I wrote about this back in 1994 and it had been known long before then ... but apparently not by everyone!

16 We3

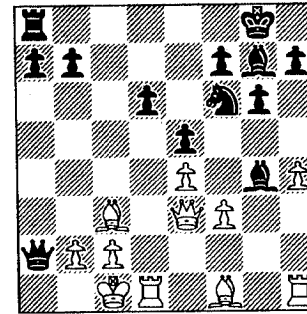
Trying to hold things together in the centre. Alternatively, 16 fxg4 Wa1+ 17 Qd2 Qxe4+ 18 Qe1 Qxc3! 19 Bxa1 Qxd4 leaves Black with three pawns for the exchange and 20 Bxc3 unplayable, as it drops the rook to 20... Qxc3+ .

16...e5!

Always keep an eye out for this move as, though blocking in the bishop and conceding the d5-square is not the first idea that would spring to mind, you would be surprised at just how effective it can occasionally be.

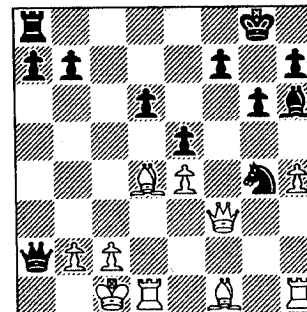
17 fxg4

The point was 17 Qc3 ...



17... Qxf3 (or even the aesthetically very pleasing 17... Qxe4) 18 Qc4 and not 18 Wxf3 Qh6+ with mate to follow on a1) 18... Wa1+ 19 Qd2 Qxe4+ 20 Wxe4 Qh6+ 21 We3 Qxe3+ 22 Qxe3 Qxd1 23 Qe2 Wc1+ with a massive material gain.

17... Qxg4 18 Wf3 Qh6+



0-1

Fans of numerous variations are going to love the next game. Regarding move-order, the main question for Black is whether to opt for the ... Ab8 and ... b5 partnership or to employ ... Bc8 and then probably ... Ab8 . By playing through these games you will understand what I mean, but the quick answer is that the former choice encourages White to take the endgame whereas the second permutation lays down the attacking gauntlet.

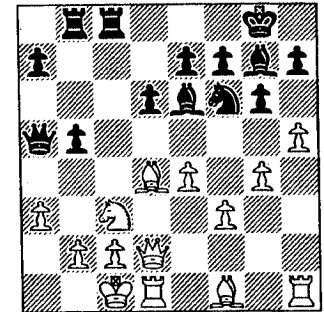
Game 5

A.Zude White

L.Riemersma Black

German Bundesliga 1996

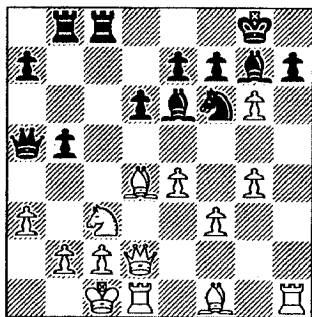
1 e4 c5 2 Qf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Qxd4 Qf6 5 Qc3 g6 6 Qe3 Qg7 7 f3 Qc6 8 Wd2 0-0 9 g4 Qe6 10 0-0-0 Qxd4 11 Qxd4 Wa5 12 a3 Bfc8 13 h4 Ab8 14 h5 b5



Things are hotting up which means that White can no longer get cold feet! The cop-out 15 Qd5? isn't available anymore because of 15... Wxd2+ 16 Bxd2 Qxd5 17 exd5 Qh6! .

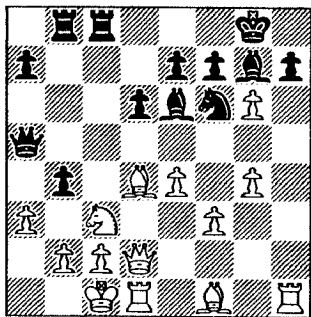
15 h6

Before continuing with the text, it is necessary to take a look at 15 hxg6!? which is also critical.



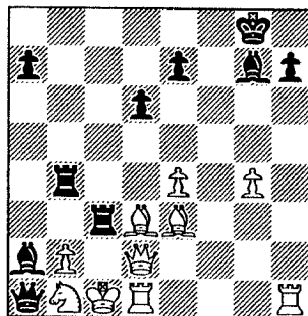
In the above position, Black has three alternatives to consider. Firstly, after 15...hxg6, (probably '?!' although I wouldn't rule out a comeback!) the pin of the b-pawn by 16 ♖g5! is quite awkward. It might not look anything special but a close inspection reveals that Black's queen has no obvious squares on which to unpin (e.g. 16...♗c7 17 e5!) while White has a clear and dangerous plan to treble on the h-file with ♔d2-h2.

With that in mind a safer reply is 15...fxg6, but, since *WWTB*, I'm still not sure whether or not I've changed my mind: 15...b4 '!?' or '?!' There are reams of exciting variations which, even when laid out, leave me confused!:



a) 16 gxf7+?! ♔xf7 17 ♖b1 ♔b3 18 axb4 ♗a1 19 ♔d3 ♔a2 20 c3 ♔xb4 looks like fantastic

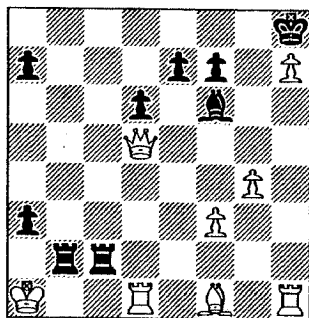
compensation for a mere pawn. 21...♔xd4 is threatened and, in view of 21 ♔e3 ♖xg4! 22 fxg4 ♔xc3+ arriving at the terminal position below,



White might have to try and grovel with 21 ♔xf6. Surely, though, he would be living on borrowed time.

b) 16 gxh7+ ♔h8 17 ♖d5 ♔xd5 with:

b1) 18 exd5 ♗xd5 19 g5 ♗a4 (Absolutely beautiful is 19 ♔b1 bxa3 20 ♔xf6 ♔xf6! 21 ♗xd5 ♔xb2+ 22 ♔a1 ♔cxc2



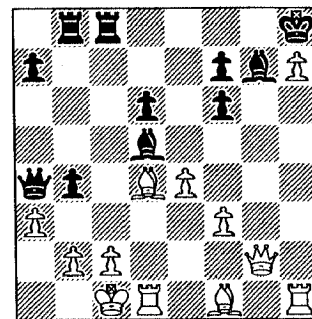
White is a queen up and has the move but he is powerless to resist the Dragon bishop (and the likes of 23...♔ba2+ 24 ♔b1 ♔cb2+ 25 ♔c1 ♔a1 mate). Note a check is rather effectively met by a check in 23 ♗a8+ ♔b8+.) 19...♗a2 20 ♗e3 e5!

21 gxf6 ♔xf6 with big defensive problems for White, e.g. 22 ♔g1 exd4 23 ♗h6 ♗a3+ 24 ♔d2 ♔xc2+!! 25 ♔xc2 b3+ 26 ♔d2 ♗xb2+ 27 ♔e1 ♔e8+ mating.

b2) 18 g5! ♗a4! 19 gxf6 ♔xf6 20 ♔xf6+ exf6 21 ♔d3 (21 exd5 bxa3 22 b3 ♗xb3 is too hot to handle and in fact 21 ♔g1 bxa3 22 ♔g8+ isn't anything because of 22...♔xh7!: remember ...axb2+ is mating.) 21...bxa3 22 ♗h6 ♗d4!! (a cool and cruel dominating move that defends f6, still attacks b2 and usefully covers g1 to rule out cheeky ♗g7+ tricks) 23 exd5 a2 24 ♔d2 ♔xc2+! 25 ♔xc2 ♗xb2 mate. I'll have some of that please!

c) 16 ♖d5! ♔xd5 17 g5 ♗a4 (certainly interesting, although in this vastly complicated position there are other moves to consider) 18 gxf6 exf6. What I find amazing about much of the computer-aided home analysis that I have done on lines such as this is that 'Fritz' and friends love the position for White, say now, but later have a remarkable change of heart—just like that! For example, from a position of apparent complete superiority (certainly materialwise) after 19 gxh7+ (upon 19 gxf7+ ♔xf7 20 ♔g1 bxa3 21 ♔xf6 axb2+ 22 ♔xb2 ♔xb2 23 ♔xg7+ ♔xg7 24 ♗g2+ ♔f6 there is no White perpetual while Black can probably win material with 25 ♔xb2 ♗b4+ 26 ♔c1 ♔b3 27 ♔d3 ♗a3+ 28 ♔d2 ♔xc2! i.e. 29 ♔xc2 ♔xc2+ 30 ♔xc2 ♗a2+) 19...♔h8 20 exd5 20...bxa3 21 ♔d3 (21 b3 ♔xb3 22 c4 a2 is no improvement) 21...axb2+ 22 ♔xb2 ♔xb2 23 ♔xb2 f5+ 24 ♔c1 ♔c3, all of a sudden White seems to be lost!

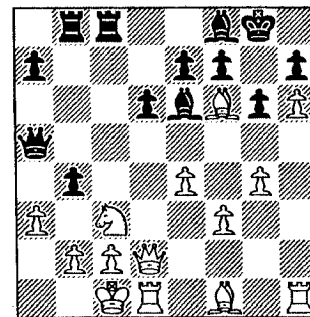
On the other hand, backing up a bit with 20 ♗g2! could be problematic.



Innocuous-looking at first, in fact 20...bxa3 21 ♔b5! unleashes a wicked threat of 22 ♗xg7+ ♔xg7 23 ♔d1+ when the black king is unable to return to h8 because of ♔xf6 mate.

15...b4

Instead 15...♔h8 would offer White a favourable endgame (and having sealed the h-file that's obviously what he's after!) with 16 ♖d5 but the odd-looking 15...♔f8! would guarantee preserving the bishops and is definitely deserving of some consideration. As far as I can make out, there is a distinct lack of practical experience with this peculiar line but I recall once analysing 16 ♔xf6 b4!?



with some fascinating options.

a) 17 ♔d4 bxa3 18 b3 (or 18 ♔b5 ♔xb5 19 ♔xb5 ♗xb5 20 bxa3 ♗a4 which shares some similarities with

the main game) 18...♙xb3 19 cxb3 ♖xb3 with the basic threats against c3 and the power of ...♗b4 simply too strong.

b) 17 axb4? ♖a1+ 18 ♖b1 ♙a2 wins on the spot.

c) 17 ♖b1?! exf6 18 ♙d3 ♖a4 19 axb4 d5. Black is only attacking with two bishops, two rooks and a queen!

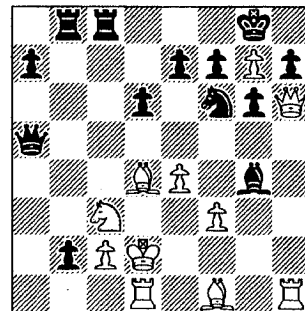
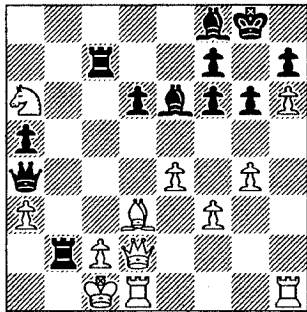
d) 17 ♖d5 and Black has

d1) 17...♖a4! with such lines as 18 ♖xb4 (18 ♖xe7+?! ♙xe7 19 ♙xe7 bxa3 would see ...a2 coming very soon!) 18...exf6 19 ♙a6 ♖c7 20 ♙d3 a5 (20...d5 looks good too, though not as pretty!) 21 ♖a6 ♖xb2!!

It's great when you see Black opting to take the pawn rather than the piece, but it is very logical. Black is simply after the enemy king and 17 bxa3?? now obviously allows 17...♖xa3 mate.

17 ♖b5

17 ♖d5? loses to 17...axb2+ 18 ♙xb2 ♖xb2! but I couldn't go on without mentioning (as annotated in *WWTD*) one of my favourite Dragon games, J.Plaskett-W.Watson, Brighton 1983. There White gave his king a flight square with the aggressive 17 ♖h6 but after 17...axb2+ 18 ♖d2 was hit with the genius-move 18...♙xg4!!



22 ♖xb2 (22 ♖xc7 ♖xa3 is also curtains) 22...♖b7+ 23 ♖b4 ♖xb4+ 24 axb4 ♖a2+ 25 ♖c3 axb4+ 26 ♖xb4 d5+ 27 ♖b5 ♖a7 with, you'll be pleased to hear, a mate in five! e.g. 28 ♖c3 ♙d7+ 29 ♖c6 ♖c5+ 30 ♖a6 ♖xc6+ 31 ♖a5 ♖c5+ 32 ♖a6 ♙c8.

d2) 17...♙xd5!? 18 ♖xd5 ♖c5 19 ♖b3 exf6 also looks preferable for the second player, in view of his attacking chances.

16 hxg7

As seen before, 16 axb4? will fall to 16...♖a1+ 17 ♖b1 ♙a2.

16...bxa3!

19 ♙xf6 (The light-squared bishop was out of bounds as 19 fxg4 e5! would have left White in serious trouble with his bishop, knight and even e-pawn.) 19...♙h5! Despite being (temporarily) two pieces up, White's g7-pawn gets in the way and the black king is as safe as houses. The same cannot be said of the white monarch who, along with the queen and two rooks, must also worry about Black's b- and a-pawns (yes, with time on his hands and White tied up, that may possibly advance to the 7th rank too).

17...♖xb5 18 ♙xb5 ♖xb5 19 bxa3

19 ♖d3 has been suggested as an improvement but after 19...axb2+ 20 ♙xb2 ♙c4 21 ♖e3 ♙e2 22 ♖d2 (a forced square in view of, say, 22 ♖de1 ♙d3 23 ♖h2 ♖b3) 22...♖b8 23 c3 ♙c4, having incarcerated White's bishop, I'm sure the majority of players would prefer Black.

19...♖a4 20 ♖h2

Preserving the a-pawn with 20 ♙b2 runs into 20...♙b3 but the text starts dropping pawns like flies.

20...♖xa3+ 21 ♙b2 ♖xf3 22 ♖e1 ♙xg4 23 ♖f2 ♖b3

Also not to be ignored is 23...♖xe4 24 ♖xf3 ♖xd2 which would have left Black with just(!) the four connected passed pawns for the exchange!

24 ♖d4 ♖b7 25 e5 dxe5 26 ♖xe5 ♙e6 27 ♖d2 ♖c7 0-1

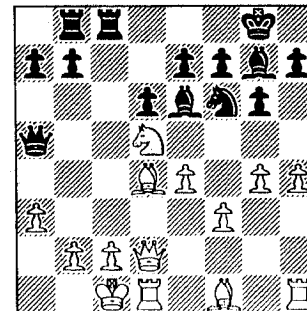
With no way in and facing an impending avalanche of black pawns, White has had enough.

Game 6

P.Motwani White
W.Watson Black

British Championship 1986

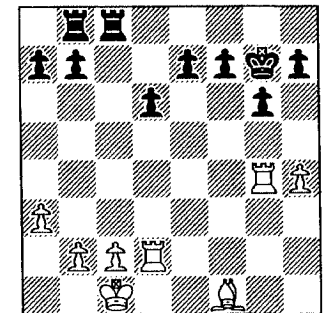
1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 g6 6 ♙e3 ♙g7 7 f3 0-0 8 ♖d2 ♖c6 9 g4 ♙e6 10 0-0-0 ♖xd4 11 ♙xd4 ♖a5 12 a3 ♖fc8 13 h4 ♖ab8 14 ♖d5



Yes, here it is in all its glory. The Yugoslav ATTACK, only swapping the queens off! I've always felt that White deserves to get ground down in an endgame after this, and, as I'm the one responsible for things around here, not surprisingly in the main game that's exactly what happens!

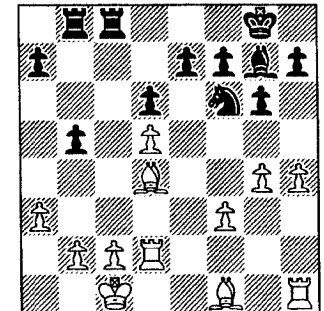
14...♖xd2+ 15 ♖xd2 ♙xd5

The text mixes things up a little as it creates an imbalance of knight for bishop. After 15...♖xd5 White does have the chance to generate some excitement with 16 exd5 ♙xd5 17 ♙xg7 ♙xf3 18 ♖h3 ♙xg4 19 ♖g3 ♖xg7 20 ♙xg4



but, realistically, more in keeping with 14 ♖d5 is to keep the volatility of the position to a minimum with 16 ♙xg7. The problem is that Black can hardly get too excited by the prospect of the bishop endgames.

16 exd5 b5!

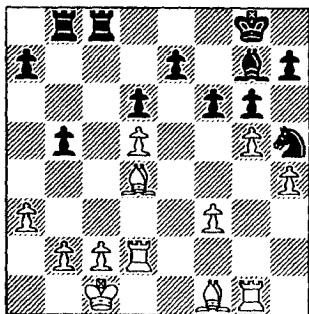


As it gives Black more breathing space, this is more accurate than the old choice of 16...a6.

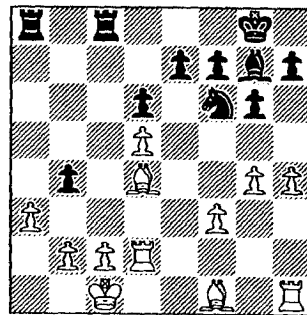
17 ♖h3

White's main argument for claiming an edge in this whole system is the pressure that his rooks can build up against the e7-pawn. The d5-pawn is usually indirectly protected by the rook on d2 (i.e. after a ♖xg7) and acts as a thorn to prevent Black's e-pawn from advancing. Meanwhile the light-squared bishop denies the black rooks certain squares and also attempts to keep tabs on the hoppy knight.

In *WSTD* I detailed a story in which these nightmare scenarios (and more) became reality for me in a tournament game against my ex-girlfriend where, clearly struggling, I was sympathetically offered a draw. That sort of thing doesn't happen to me these days. Er, getting a girlfriend that is! Of course, things could still go wrong on the chessboard but not with the right care and attention (which ironically is where I think I went wrong on the girlfriend thing!). Anyway, as an alternative to the text, 17 g5 ♖h5 18 ♖g1 was tried against me by an experienced Czech Grandmaster, to which I actually responded with a very precise move (occasionally it happens!). Indeed after 18...f6!



19 ♖h3 (Again the 19 ♖xa7?! ♖a8 20 ♖d4 b4 principle works, since 21 ♖h3 f5 22 ♖e1 ♖xd4 23 ♖xd4 bxa3 24 bxa3 ♖xa3 25 ♖xe7 ♖xf3 is good for Black despite the enemy rook on the 7th.) 19...f5 (the idea being to remove the ♖g4 option) 20 ♖gd1 b4 21 axb4 ♖xb4 22 c3 ♖xd4 23 ♖xd4 ♖cc4 24 ♖4d2 ♖a4 25 ♖f1 ♖xh4, I had managed to net a pawn (V.Jansa-C.Ward, Isle of Man 1998). Note that the tactic on offer to regain the pawn after 17 ♖xa7?! is 17...♖a8 18 ♖d4 b4.



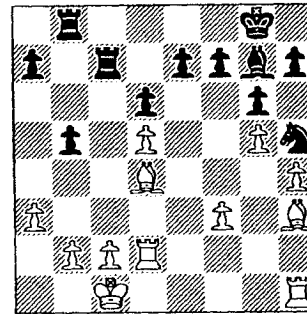
I have benefited from this idea of a rook mate on a1 a few times and so has a new Swedish Grandmaster: 19 ♖e2 bxa3 20 b3 ♖a5 21 ♖c4 ♖d7 22 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 23 ♖e2 ♖b6 24 ♖hd1 a2 25 ♖b2 ♖xd5 26 ♖a6 ♖xa6 27 ♖xd5 a1=♖+ 28 ♖xa1 ♖xa1 29 ♖xa1 ♖xc2 30 ♖d3 ♖f6 31 ♖b1 ♖c7 32 ♖b2 ♖e5 33 b4 d5 34 ♖b3 d4 35 b5 ♖d5 36 ♖b4 ♖c4+ 37 ♖a5 ♖c3 38 ♖d1 ♖c5 39 ♖a6 ♖a3+ 40 ♖b7 ♖b3 0-1 K.Pulkkinen-S.Brynell, Haermondland 1994.

17...♖c7

Preventing White from winning material with his next move. This position highlights how much more useful 16...b5! is than 16...a6. Not only is Black quicker with an offensive ...b4 but his rooks have more

space. White will not, for example, ever be able to flick in an annoying ♖b6.

18 g5 ♖h5

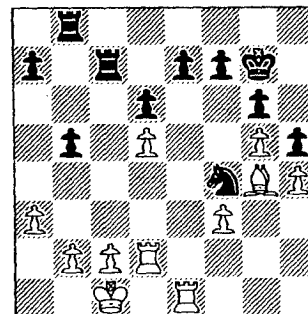


Black is happy for the dark-squared bishops to be traded off as it is the bishop PAIR advantage that White really has.

19 ♖g4

Instead 19 ♖e1 b4 20 axb4 ♖xb4 21 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 22 ♖e4 ♖xe4 23 fxe4 h6 24 ♖f2 hxg5 25 hxg5 ♖c4 26 ♖g2 f6 27 gxf6+ ♖xf6 saw the 'true' white bishop step forward in an encounter involving the current British Champion. Indeed, thanks to the good knight vs bad bishop factor and his outside passed g-pawn, Black went on to convert the full point: B.Stein-J.Hodgson, Copenhagen 1985.

19...♖f4 20 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 21 ♖e1 h5!



The black knight is on a good square and there are plenty of other attractive and accessible locations too. However, the light-squared bishop clearly has its limitations.

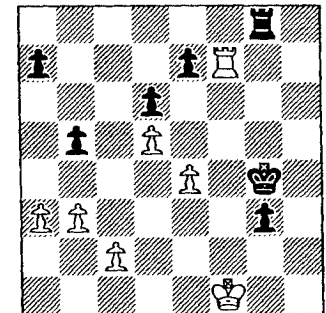
22 gxf6+ ♖xh6 23 ♖e4 ♖c4 24 b3

After 24 ♖xc4 bxc4, White would still have more isolated pawns than Black and the one on d5 would be in immediate danger of dropping off. Also 25 ♖d4?? ♖e2+ should be noted.

24...♖xe4 25 fxe4 ♖h5 26 ♖xh5

Before Black's knight manoeuvres itself to some untouchable location, White takes this rare opportunity to offload his bishop. Alas, he is still left with an inferior position due, in the main, to the active black king.

26...♖xh5 27 ♖f2 f6 28 ♖f4 ♖g8 29 ♖d2 g5 30 hxg5 fxg5 31 ♖f7 g4 32 ♖e1 g3 33 ♖f1 ♖g4



34 ♖g2

On 34 ♖xe7, 34...♖c8 is very dangerous. Needless to say, that old kettle of fish "All rook and pawn endgames are drawn" does not apply to ultra passive positions like this.

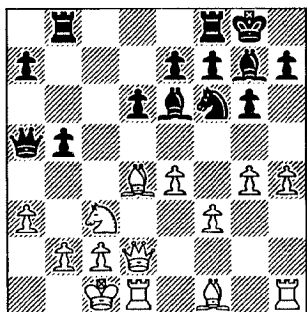
34...♖c8 35 ♖g7+ ♖f4 36 ♖f7+ ♖xe4 37 ♖xe7+ ♖xd5 38 c4+ bxc4 39 bxc4+ ♖xc4 40 ♖xa7 ♖g8 41 a4 ♖b4 42 a5 ♖b5 43 ♖d7 ♖g6 44

♖a7 d5 45 ♗d7 ♖g5 46 ♖a7 d4 47 ♗d7 ♖g4 48 ♗d5+ ♘c4 49 ♗d6 ♘c5 50 ♗d7 ♖g6 51 ♗d8 ♘c4 52 ♗c8+ ♘d3 53 ♖a8 ♘d2 54 a6 d3 55 a7 ♖g7 56 ♘g1 g2 0-1

Game 7

D.Popescu White
D.Dumitrache Black
Creon Open 2000

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 cxd4 5 ♘xd4 g6 6 ♖e3 ♖g7 7 f3 0-0 8 ♗d2 ♘c6 9 0-0-0 ♘xd4 10 ♘xd4 ♘e6 11 g4 ♗a5 12 a3 ♖ab8 13 h4 b5



The difference between this and the last game is that Black has substituted ...♖fc8 for ...b5. I realise that I am prone to the occasional sarcastic outburst, particularly on the subject of so-called Yugoslav Attack players 'bottling' it to aim for endgames. However, with this particular move order, White must be advised to get those queens off now by 14 ♘d5. Then 14...♗xd2+ 15 ♖xd2 a5 would transpose to the next game while 15...♖fc8 was just handled in the previous example.

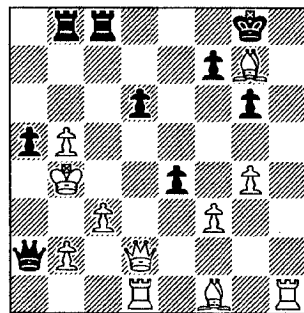
14 h5?!

Played in the spirit of things but probably suicidal. Obviously, in general, ...♖fc8 is a very useful move, but the tempo saved on not

playing it here translates to a swift crashing down the b-file.

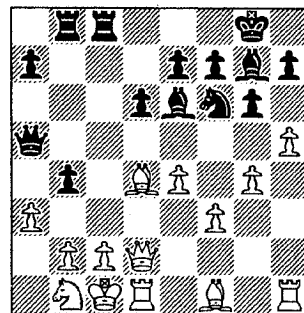
14...b4 15 ♘b1

Not for the first time I observe that 15 axb4? loses to 15...♗a1+ 16 ♘b1 ♖a2. The only obvious alternative is 15 ♘d5. Though, on the surface, it looks less passive, in fact after 15...♘xd5 16 exd5 ♗xd5 17 axb4 ♗a2! the trapped white king is lacking in defenders. One practical encounter saw 18 c3 ♖fc8 19 hxg6 hxg6 20 b5 e5 21 ♖f2 e4! 22 ♘d4 ♘d5 23 c4 (Pinned pawns is the theme for this game and what better way to illustrate it than by 23 ♘xg7 ♗a1+ 24 ♘c2 ♘b4+ 25 ♘b3 ♗a2+ 26 ♘xb4 a5 mate.)



23...e3 24 ♗h2 ♖xc4+ 25 ♖xc4 ♗xc4+ 26 ♗c2 ♖c8 27 ♖h2 ♘xd4 28 ♖e2 ♘f4 0-1 E.Tonning-S.Reschke, Groningen 1995.

15...♖fc8



I suppose a crude explanation of success for White in the Yugoslav Attack is to crack open the h-file for the queen and rook and then trade off the key defensive black f6-knight by ♘d5. Indeed, as we know, often Black must sacrifice a rook for the knight while it is on c3, in order to prevent this from happening. Here the white knight isn't proving to be much of a threat!

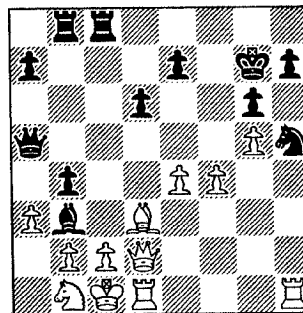
16 hxg6 fxg6 17 g5

It's vaguely worth pointing out that 17 ♘xf6? ♘xf6 18 ♗h6, essentially hoping for a spite check or two (though I doubt White quite sees it that way when engaging in such a sequence), fails miserably. Besides the crushing 18...bxa3, Black has 18...♖g5+ winning the queen or 18...♘xb2+ 19 ♘xb2 bxa3+ with a mate in four, e.g. 20 ♘c1 ♖xb1+ 21 ♘xb1 a2+ 22 ♘b2 ♗c3+ 23 ♘c1 ♗xc2 mate. All in all, not to be recommended!

17...♘h5 18 ♖xg7 ♘xg7 19 f4

Though rather slow, this is still White's only real offensive option.

19...♘b3 20 ♘d3



20...♗a4

20...♘xc2!? 21 ♘xc2 b3 22 ♘c3 (But not the crowd-pulling—that is

before the pieces are rapidly set up for the next game!—22 ♗xa5?? ♖xc2 mate) 22...bxc2 23 ♘xc2 ♗a4+ 24 ♘c1 ♘g3 25 ♖he1 ♘xe4 also looks rather good.

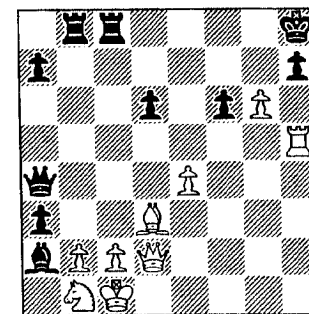
21 ♖xh5

Predictable (don't White players just love to get this move in!) but actually not that helpful.

21...gxf5 22 ♖h1 ♖a2 23 f5 bxa3 24 f6+ ♘h8 25 ♖xh5 exf6

White's advances on the kingside might look a little frightening but in fact he was threatening zilch. Black plays cautiously but could have gotten away with 25...axb2+ 26 ♘d1 ♘xb1 27 ♗h2 ♘xc2+ 28 ♘d2 ♗a5+ as the white king has nowhere to hide.

26 g6



26...♖c7

Amusingly, 26...♖xb2 27 ♖xh7+ ♘g8 28 ♖h8+ ♘xh8 29 ♗h6+ ♘g8 30 ♗h7+ ♘f8 31 g7+ ♘e8 easily wins for Black as, of course, the a2-bishop guards g8.

27 ♗f4 axb2+ 28 ♘d2 ♗d4? 0-1

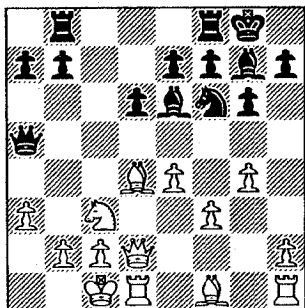
A bizarre time to resign as 29 c3 may well have had Black kicking himself for passing up the numerous opportunities he had to kill off his opponent.

Game 8

M.Nouro White
S.Hansen Black

Politiken Cup, Copenhagen 1996

1 e4 c5 2 d3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 dxd4 d6 5 d3 g6 6 e3 e7 7 f3 c6 8 Wd2 0-0 9 g4 e6 10 0-0-0 dxd4 11 e4xd4 Wa5 12 a3 Eab8

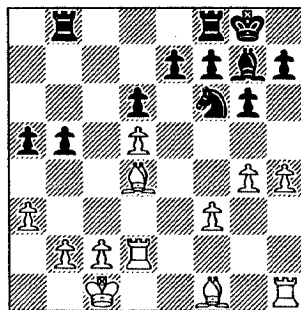


13 h4

As previously suggested, if Black is going to go for a rapid b-pawn advance (at the expense of ...Efc8) then White must soon bail out into an ending. A featured game in *WWTD* ran 13 g5 d5 14 e6 g7 d5 15 b1 Efc8 16 d5 Wxd2 17 Exd2 e4 18 exd5 d5 19 e3 h3 Ee4 20 e1 f8 21 Ee4 Ebc8 22 c3 E8c7 23 Ee3 h6 24 gxh6 d5 25 c2 f5 26 Eed4 d8 27 b3 Exd4 28 Exd4 d6 29 e1 g7 30 h4 Ee5 31 c4 Ee8 32 d2 d7 33 e2 a5 34 e1 f6 35 e3 Ee8 36 e2 e5 37 e1 d5 38 a4 d6, when White, now saddled with a bad bishop as well as doubled pawns, went on to lose convincingly in the game, K.Müller-A.Khalifman, Germany 1992.

13...b5 14 g5

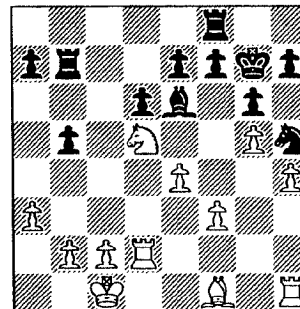
The text game is a good demonstration of how to handle these positions for Black. However, also delightfully instructive is the 14 d5 Wxd2+ 15 Exd2 e4 16 exd5 a5



(essentially Black has opted for ...a5 instead of the ...Efc8 of game 6. Both options are eminently playable and not unlikely to transpose) 17 c3 (and not the 17 h5?? of J.Nunn-C.Ward, *Simultaneous, Sevenoaks 1983*, which even if not taken up(!) does allow 17...e6!) 17...Efc8 18 b4 axb4 19 axb4 e5 20 dxe6 fxe6 21 b2 e5 22 e2 e4 23 e2 d5 24 fxg4 e4 25 c1 Ee8 26 Ee2 Ea1+ 27 c2 Ea2+ 28 d1 Ea1+ 29 c2 e4 30 d2 Ea2+ 31 d1 Ea1+ 32 d2 Ea2+ 33 d1 Ee2 34 exd2 Ee2+ 35 d1 Exf2 36 e4 of M.Borriss-W.Watson, Germany 1997. Some beautiful tactics, making the most of his pieces, left Black in a position to go on and win this opposite-coloured bishop endgame.

14...d5 15 e6 g7 d5 16 d5 Again necessary to intercept Black's ...b4 plan.

16...Wxd2+ 17 Exd2 Ee7?!

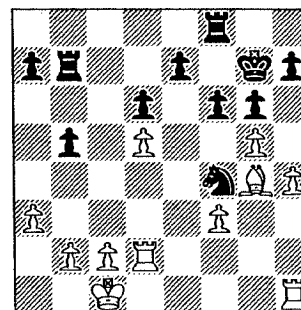


17...e4 was playable but the text demonstrates that Black can live with the knight on d5. It is useful for Black to guard his second rank and here he craftily waits for White to commit his bishop before conceding his own.

18 e3 h3 e4 19 exd5 f6!

Taking full advantage of the rook still being on the f-file. The usefulness of the b7-rook is highlighted by the fact that, if it were possible (read on!) now, 20 e1 would not be threatening to take the e7-pawn.

20 e4 d4



21 b1

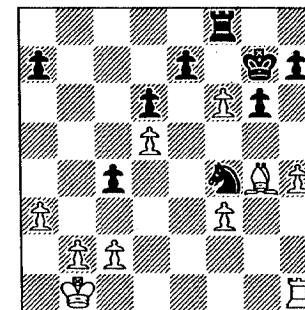
A strange-looking move, only understood when one notices that the h1-rook can't move anyway because of ...f5, trapping the bishop. White is struggling to find something to do and wants to play

Ee4 without allowing the fork ...e2+.

21...Ee7 22 Ee4 Ee4

I'm sure the similarity with Game 6 would not have escaped the reader.

23 Exc4 bxc4 24 gxf6+

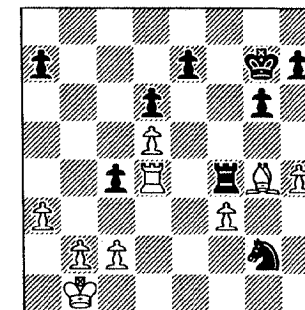


Hardly desirable as now White is left with two isolated kingside pawns. However, his d-pawn was hanging and the immediate 24 Ee1 was no good because of the aforementioned 24...f5.

24...Exf6 25 Ee1

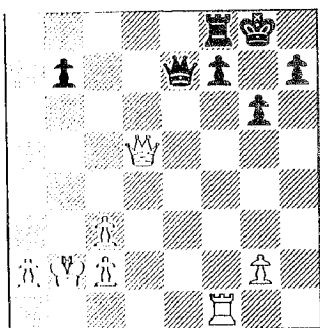
From one passive square to another. White has no choice but to bide his time until he gets a whiff of activity.

25...d2 26 Ee4 Ee4!



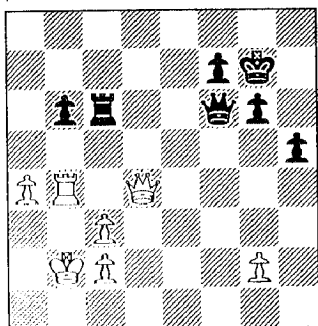
Sure, bishops are generally better than knights in endgames where

25 fxe4 ♖xe4 26 ♔b2 ♖xh4 27 ♗d5 ♗c7



Black's 3 to 1 pawn majority on the kingside is far more effective than White's equivalent on the queenside. It is only the fact that it is a g-pawn that White has, rather than an f- or h-, that makes the endgame such a hard slog.

28 ♠f4 ♠c8 29 ♠e4 ♗f6 30 ♠d4 ♠c6 31 ♔b3 h5 32 a4 ♗f1 33 ♔b2 ♗e1 34 ♗a5 ♗e6 35 ♗d8+ ♔g7 36 ♠b4 b6 37 ♗d4+ ♗f6

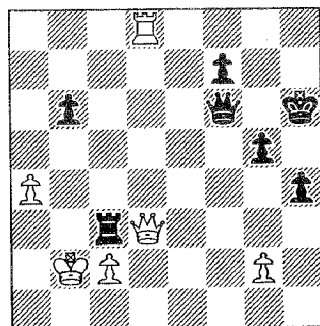


With his connected pawns, Black would easily convert a rook and pawn endgame. Unless it entails ironing his pawns out, White is right to stubbornly refuse to trade queens. With these and the rooks present Black must think twice about exposing his own king too much.

38 ♗e3 ♠e6 39 ♗d4 ♠d6 40 ♗e3 ♠e6 41 ♗d4 g5 42 ♗d2 h4 43 ♠d4 ♔g6 44 ♠d8 ♠c6 45 ♠g8+ ♔h6 46 ♗d3 ♠c5 47 ♠d8?!

Black is favourite to take the full point, but this makes his task a little easier.

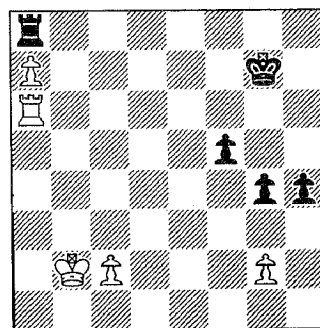
47...♠xc3!



The white queen is overworked. 48 ♠d6 ♠xd3+ 49 ♠xf6+ ♔g7 50 ♠xb6 ♠d8

Black has got the rook ending that he was seeking. Now it is up to his superior pawns to work their magic.

51 a5 g4 52 a6 f5 53 a7 ♠a8 54 ♠a6



The problem for White is that, in rook endings, isolated pawns are nothing like as dangerous as connected pawns. Even if the white c-pawn made it to the end of the board, Black could effectively give

up his rook for the two of them. On the other hand, there is no chance that the white rook could trade itself for the more troublesome black pawns on the kingside.

54...g3 55 ♔c3

55 ♠a4 h3 56 gxh3 g2 57 ♠a1 f4, with an unstoppable ...f3-f2, would justify my previous remarks. Instead White attempts to utilise his king as a defender but it is a futile exercise.

55...f4 56 ♠a1 f3 57 ♔d3

Upon 57 gxf3, both 57...g2 and 57...h3 would seal victory.

57...fxg2 58 ♔e2 ♠f8 0-1

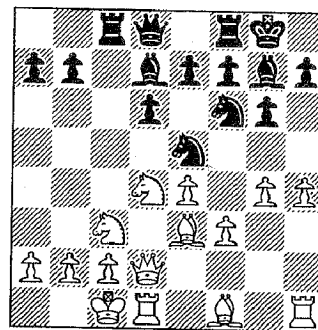
One of several ways to win. The white king is cut off and the black pawns are ready to continue their march unhindered.

Game 2
K.Müller White

C.Ward Black

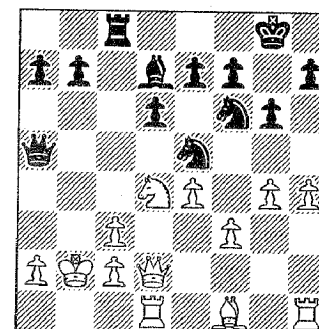
German Bundesliga 1997

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 g6 6 ♔e3 ♔g7 7 f3 ♖c6 8 ♗d2 0-0 9 0-0-0 ♔d7 10 g4 ♠c8 11 h4 ♖e5



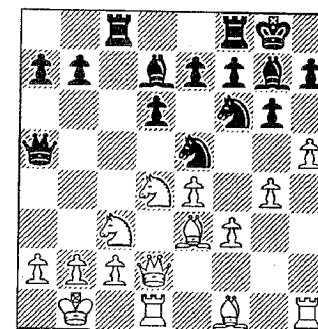
12 h5

Upon 12 ♔h6 it's the same old story: 12...♔xh6 13 ♗xh6 ♠xc3! 14 bxc3 ♗a5. Indeed, now 15 ♔b2 ♠c8 16 ♗d2, leading to the following position ...



...walked into 16...♔xf3! 17 ♖xf3 ♖xe4 18 ♗d4 ♖xc3 19 ♔c4 ♖xd1+ 20 ♠xd1 ♔xg4, when, as 21 ♗xg4 enabled 21...♗b4+ in I.Nikolaidis-D.Kanavarakis, Heraklio Open 1993, a few simple tactics had virtually handed Black a win on a plate.

12...♗a5 13 ♔b1



A tidy-looking but nevertheless provocative response. Alternatives are considered in Game 4.

13...♠xc3

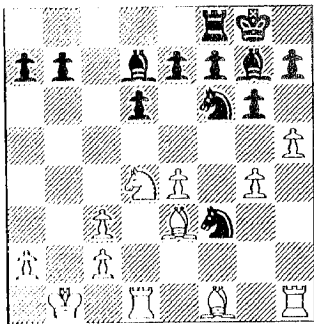
For reasons that will be made clear after you have read both this and Game 3, arguably this isn't as accurate as the next-up 13...♔xf3!?. Nevertheless similar positions can easily be reached.

14 ♗xc3

Only a White player with suicidal tendencies would take on 14 bxc3?, particularly in view of the now

familiar theme 14...♖xf3! 15 ♖xf3 ♗xe4 e.g. 16 ♖d3 ♗xc3+ 17 ♖c1 ♗xa2! 18 ♖b1 ♗c3+ 19 ♖c1 ♖a1! 20 ♖d2 ♖xd1 mate.

14...♗xc3 15 bxc3 ♖xf3



I can vividly recall the situation surrounding this whole game. It was a German Bundesliga match, which is an 8 board affair. My team, Wuppertal, were playing an away match against Hamburg and, it being my debut season, I was a little shocked when my team captain took me aside for a chat. "Now the important thing", he insisted, "is that you don't lose"! I've since seen how it is not unusual for seven games to be drawn with some poor sap losing and incurring the wrath of all but the opposition. Having left the building for the first part of play, the boss was none too impressed when he returned to see that, not only was I the exchange down, but there was now another piece on offer! You should have seen the look on his face when his quick calculations lead him to the conclusion that I would soon be a whole rook down. Meanwhile, by way of an explanation to him, I searched my limited German vocabulary for words such as 'leopards' and 'spots'!

16 ♖xf3

If you play over the main game first, and particularly the notes to Black's 19th move, you will understand why, after 16 h6! ♖b8 17 ♖xf3 ♗xg4 18 ♗g2 ♗xe4 19 ♖d3 ♗xc3+ 20 ♖b2, Black no longer has the alleged 'forced' draw with 20...♗d1+. The point is that White can play 21 ♖c1, in view of the fact that there is no ...♖h6 pin after 21...♗xe3 22 ♖xe3.

Clearly, though, Black has other 20th move alternatives and similar positions to the main game could easily arise. I guess my view is that objectively White should be better but, with humans playing, there are definitely reasonable practical chances for Black.

16...♗xg4 17 ♗g2

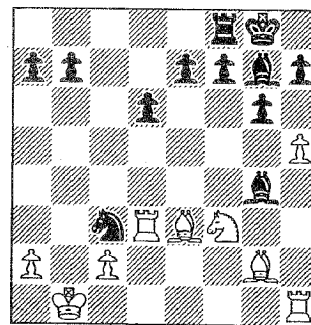
The problem with 17 ♗e2?! is that after 17...♗xe4 18 ♖d3 (Instead 18 ♗d2 ♗xh5, leading shortly to five pawns and an initiative for a rook, looks fine, while 18 ♗d4 e5! 19 ♖h4 exd4 20 ♖xg4 ♗xc3+ 21 ♖c1 ♗xe2+ 22 ♖d2 ♗c3 was comfortably won by Black in M.Rogerson-R.Pert, British Rapid-play 2000) 18...♗xc3+, as the bishop hangs on e2, White is forced to part with the exchange on c3.

Regarding the whole issue of the h5-h6 argument. i.e. whether White has an opportunity to play it and whether or not it is good idea, it is worth noting that here 17 h6 ♗xf3 18 hxg7 ♖c8 19 ♗d3 ♗xd1 20 ♖xd1 leaves Black with the better chances, e.g. 20...b6 21 ♖b2 ♖xg7 22 a4 h5 23 ♖b3 ♖h8 24 ♖h1 h4 25 ♖b4 h3 26 ♗f1 when 26...♖h4 was perhaps good for Black but 26...h2! would have been even stronger in T.Bakre-R.Pert, Hastings Challengers 2001.

17...♗xe4 18 ♖d3

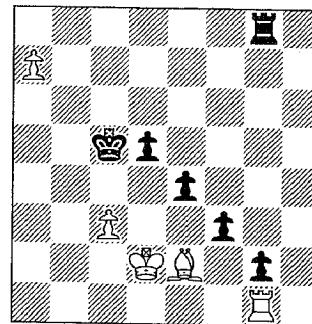
18 ♖b2 ♗xc3 19 ♖d3 will transpose to our main line.

18...♗xc3+



19 ♖b2!

As it allows a variety of discovered checks, this continuation initiates many complications. Nevertheless it is probably the correct choice. With the a2-pawn ready to drop, 19 ♖c1 ♗f5 encourages even more pressure while I had a marathon encounter after 19 ♖xc3 ♗xc3 20 hxg6 hxg6 21 ♗xa7 b6 22 ♖h4 ♗xf3 23 ♗xf3 ♖c8 24 ♖e4 e6 25 ♖e3 b5 26 ♖d3 d5 27 ♗d4 b4 28 a4 ♖a8 29 ♗xc3 bxc3 30 ♖d4 ♖g7 31 ♖a2 ♖f6 32 ♖b3 ♖e5 33 ♖d1 f5 34 ♖e1+ ♖d6 35 ♖g1 ♖g8 36 a5 g5 37 a6 g4 38 ♗e2 e5 39 ♖xc3 g3 40 ♖d1 ♖c8+ 41 ♖b3 ♖c5 42 c3 ♖a8 43 ♖c2 f4 44 ♖f1 ♖g8 45 ♖d2 g2 46 ♖g1 e4 47 a7 f3



48 ♗xf3 exf3 49 ♖e3 ♖b6 50 ♖a1 ♖b7 51 ♖xf3 g1=♖ 52 a8=♖+ ♖xa8 53 ♖xg1 ♖a3 54 ♖e3 ♖xc3+ ½-½ Wang Zili-C.Ward, London 1997. I was shattered after this game and more than a little disappointed. No doubt there were other slight improvements throughout, but I had been aware that 49...♖f8! would have secured the full point. Nevertheless, I'm sure you'll agree, certainly more fun for Black to play!

19...♖c8

I remember analysing this variation a long time ago without reaching any concrete conclusions (unclear doesn't count!). I doubt that I would have recalled my analysis anyway during this encounter, other than remembering that 19...b5 and 19...♗d1+! were among the candidate moves. Regarding the latter, obviously 20 ♖b1 could result in a draw by repetition by 20...♗c3+, while other options include:

a) 20 ♖c1? ♗xe3 21 ♖xe3 ♗h6 is definitely not what White is looking for!

b) 20 ♖b3 ♗e6+ 21 ♖b4 a5+ looks at least a little worrying for White.

c) 20 ♖a3 ♗xe3 (A snippet from a very old home preparation database of mine declares 20...♗b2 21 ♖b3 ♗c4+ 22 ♖b4 ♖c8 23 ♗xa7 ♗xh5 to be 'probably better for White but it's always nice to have four connected passed pawns') 21 ♖xe3 ♖c8 22 ♖xe7 (or 22 hxg6 hxg6 23 ♗e1 ♖c7 when the pawns are getting ready to roll.) 22...♗xf3 23 ♗xf3 ♖c3+ 24 ♖b4 ♖xf3 25 ♖xb7 with a difficult one to assess. I like Black's pairing of rook and bishop to compliment his g- and f-pawns. I'm also not too worried

about White's queenside pawns but there is a reservation. The thorny white h-pawn could pose a problem to the black king when you consider back rank or dropping-the-h7-pawn dangers.

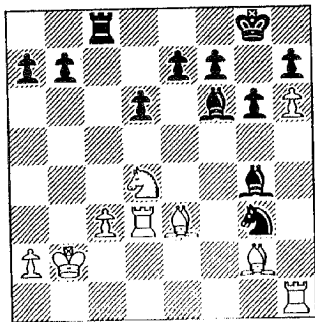
20 h6!

Though not forcing 20...♔h8, as it would have done on move 16, this is clearly an ambitious continuation. Potentially, of course, White could lose this pawn and face even more passed black pawns. However, White prefers to adopt an optimistic attitude. Now the black king is constricted by back rank problems and he must always guard against having his own h-pawn removed.

20...♕f6 21 ♖d4

Eliminating the discovered check by 21 ♕d4?! is not so accurate as it encourages Black's pawns to advance, e.g. 21...♖a4+ 22 ♖c1 e5! 23 ♖a3 ♕f5 24 ♖e1 exd4 25 ♖xa4 d3, when Black's remaining pieces combine very well.

21...♖e2 22 c3 ♖g3



I remember, during the game, wondering if I might be clutching at straws. You'd think that if you were a whole rook down your position might require a bit of urgency. But here I was casually moving my knight around the board hoping for something good to turn up! Still,

though they haven't got going yet, my kingside pawn mass remains intact.

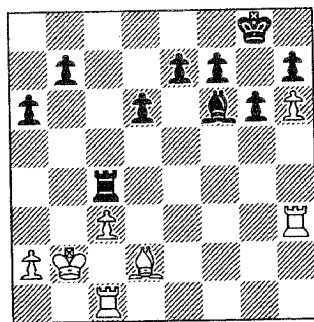
23 ♖c1

Annoying Black's pieces along the g-file by 23 ♖g1!? may have been stronger.

23...a6 24 ♕d2 ♖f5 25 ♖xf5

White is eager to trade pieces but 25 ♕e4!? was probably more accurate.

25...♕xf5 26 ♕h3 ♕xh3 27 ♖xh3 ♖c4



The position can now be seen in a pure form. Black has four pawns (three of which are connected and passed) for the rook. It is essential for Black that he keeps his rook on the board. It will assist in the push of his pawns and be around in the disastrous event of White creating his own passed pawn. Activating my rook with the text seemed logical but perhaps more to the point would have been 27...♕e5!? as that would have facilitated a faster ...f5, ...♖f7 etc.

28 ♖c2 b5

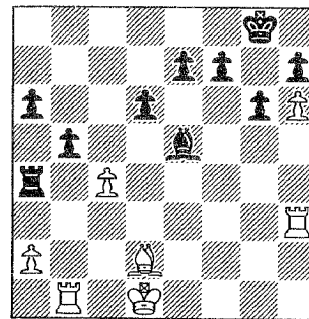
My master plan was to shore up the queenside but more alacrity with my kingside pawns might be a more practical plan.

29 ♖b1 ♖a4 30 ♖d1 ♕e5

White was looking for 30...♖xa2 31 c4 which occurs by a sort of

transposition. Black really doesn't want to allow White access to his back rank but something has to give.

31 c4



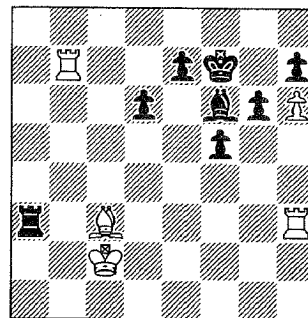
31...♖xa2

Upon 31...♖xc4 there follows 32 ♖a3 as 32...♖c6 falls foul of 33 ♖xb5.

32 cxb5 axb5 33 ♖xb5 f5

At last something happens but now there is plenty of White activity to deal with.

34 ♖b7 ♕f6 35 ♕c3 ♖a3 36 ♖c2 ♖f7



37 ♕xf6?!

A not unsurprising practical decision as, after the text, if anyone, only White can win. After 37 ♖d3 (37 ♖b2 has the same idea but may drop a tempo after 37...♖xc3 38 ♖xc3 g5) 37...♕xc3 38 ♖xc3

♖xc3+ 39 ♖xc3. I suppose some may fear the pawns but my feeling is that White should be winning. I really wanted to preserve the rooks but upon, say, 38...♖a5, White has 39 ♖e3, forcing 39...♖e5 anyway. Actually it's quite possible that this would offer Black a better pawns vs rook scenario but he will still remain the underdog.

37...♖xh3 38 ♕xe7 ♖e6 39 ♕g5

It's easy to suggest 39 ♕f8!? as an improvement but that does nothing to help keep Black's g- and f-pawns in check.

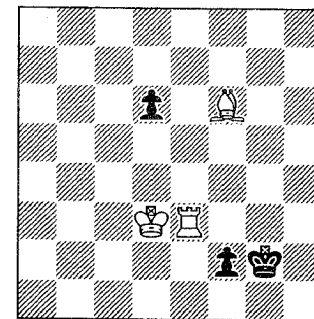
39...♖h5 40 ♖e7+ ♖d5 41 ♕d2 g5 42 ♖xh7 f4 43 ♖g7 ♖xh6 44 ♖xg5+ ♖e4

I was hoping not to have to defend a rook and bishop vs rook ending and fortunately, as it turned out, I didn't have to.

45 ♖g1 ♖f6 46 ♖e1+ ♖f3 47 ♖d3 ♖g2 48 ♖e2+ ♖f1 49 ♕c3 f3

Initiating a cute sequence to end the game.

50 ♖e1+ ♖g2 51 ♕xf6 f2 52 ♖e2 ♖f3 53 ♖e3+ ♖g2



Yes I'm six points down with the d-pawn hardly pulling its weight. Nevertheless White cannot win the key f-pawn.

54 ♖e2 ♖f3 55 ♖e3+ ♖g2 56 ♖e2 1/2-1/2

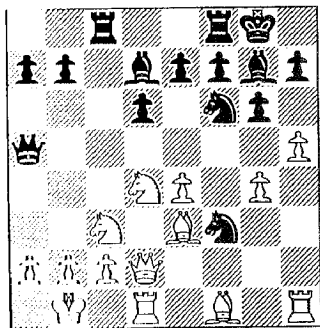
Game 3

V.Saravanan White
C.Duncan Black
British Championship,
Scarborough 1999

1 e4 c5 2 d3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4
dxd4 d6 5 dxc3 g6 6 e3 eg7 7
f3 dxc6 8 d2 d7 9 0-0-0 Ec8 10
g4 de5 11 h4 0-0 12 h5 Wa5

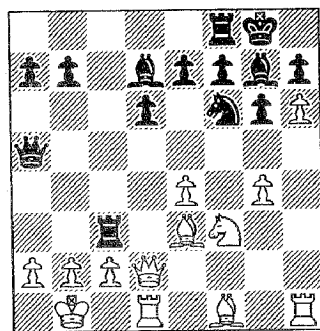
Although collecting three king-
side pawns for a piece is a common
and fascinating theme in the
Dragon, you should not be lulled
into a false sense of security. Indeed
the 12...dxf3 13 dxf3 exg4 14
ec2 exh5 15 d4 Wa5 16 exh5
fxh5 17 d5!? ef6? 18 ed4 eh8
19 Exh5! gxh5 20 exf6+ exf6 21
Wh6 1-0 of C.Walsh-C.Duncan,
4NCL, West Bromwich 1996, dem-
onstrates that the black pawn shield
is certainly not impenetrable.

13 eb1 dxf3!



14 dxf3 Exc3 15 h6?!

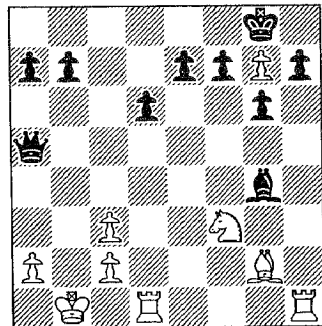
The point of the move-order is
that White couldn't get this in last
go as his queen was *en prise*. Hence
he tries to sneak it in now but he
would be better off accepting the
fate of Game 2 by 15 dxc3 dxc3
16 bxc3 exg4.



15...dxe4

This game proves that White's
whole idea is horribly flawed. The
text is good, although certainly at-
tractive is also the finish: 15...ec6!
16 dxc3 dxa2+ 17 ec1 Wa1+ 18
ed2 dxe4+ 19 ed3 dxd1+ 20
exd4 ed5+ 21 ef4 dxf3+ 22 eg5
ef6+ 23 dxf6 dxf6 mate. Instead,
16 a3 is forced when 16...dxe4 17
hxg7 dxd2+ 18 exd2 Efc8 19
exc3 Exc3 20 bxc3 exg4 20
eg2

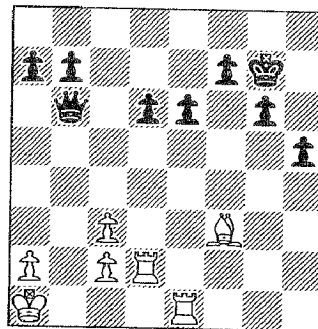
16 a3 is forced when 16...dxe4 17
hxg7 dxd2+ 18 exd2 Efc8 19
exc3 Exc3 20 bxc3 exg4 20
eg2



After 20 d3 ef5 White cannot
play 21 Ee3 because of 21...Wb6+.
20...h5

No, there was nothing wrong with
capturing the pawn on g7, with or
without the check on b6. Setting this
pawn on its way isn't bad either,
though.

21 Ehe1 Wb6+ 22 ea1 e6 23
Ed2 exf3 24 exf3 exg7

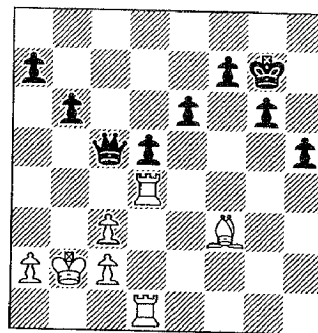


The dust has settled. White has
two rooks and a bishop for a queen
but the pawn count isn't looking
quite so good. White's own pawn
structure is pretty dreadful while on
the other side of the board there is
that small matter of four connected
passed pawns to deal with!

25 Ed4 Wc5 26 eb2 b6

Solid! Black makes sure his house
is in order before getting down to
business.

27 Ed1 d5

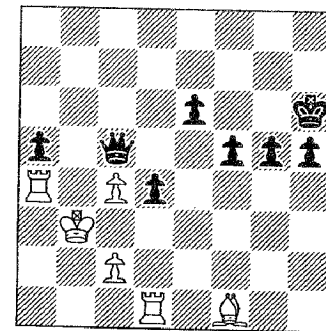


White's main difficulty is finding
any serious activity for his pieces.

28 ee2 eh6 29 eb3 f5

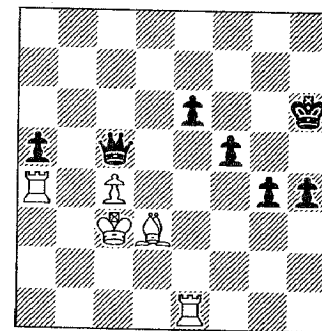
Here they come! There are several
ways for Black to go about advanc-
ing his pawns and Black's way
works just fine—up to a point!

30 ef1 a5 31 a3 b5 32 a4 bxa4+
33 Exa4 g5 34 e4 d4



White has done well to get a
passed pawn of his own but now his
pieces are very poorly coordinated.

35 c3 dxc3 36 exd3 g4 37 ed3
h4 38 Ee1



38...Wb6

This is still okay, although 38...e5
would have been more to the point
as 39 exf5 drops a piece to
39...Wd4+ 40 eb3 Wf2.

39 Eb1.

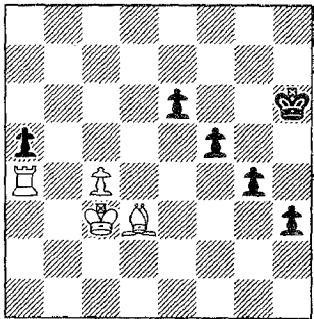
White is just being annoying.
Now all Black need do is move his
queen to a safe square, away from

the clutches of an enemy piece. Alas, in an amazing display of overconfidence, Black fails to do this and ultimately suffers dearly for his complacency.

39...♖xb1? 40 ♔xb1 h3?

Perhaps I have been a bit harsh on Chris who, despite the over-elaboration, is in fact still winning. He simply overlooked White's defence which doesn't work in the event of 40...g3! 41 ♔d3 g2 42 ♖a1 h3 43 ♗f1 because of 43...g1=♖.

41 ♔d3!



41...♗g5

I suspect that Black's error lay in ruling this bishop out of the equation. Now, for example, 41...g3 could be met by 42 ♗f1 as 42...g2 43 ♗xg2 hxg2 44 ♖a1 f4 45 ♔d3 leaves the white king on hand to help and the c-pawn rearing to promote.

42 ♗f1 ♖f4

This plan would be alright were it not for the presence of a white passed pawn.

43 ♗xh3 gxh3 44 c5+ ♔g3 45 c6 h2 46 ♖a1 1-0

Soon it will be White who has the queen. No doubt Black's emotions here, and ten moves previously, were somewhat different!

Game 4

K.Asrian White
S.Soloviov Black
Chigorin Memorial,
St Petersburg 1999

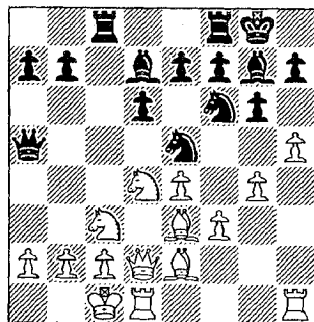
1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 g6 6 ♗e3 ♗g7 7 f3 0-0 8 ♖d2 ♗c6 9 g4

As indicated in chapter 5, the advantage of this system (over say 9 0-0-0 d5) is that it can be played against 9 0-0-0 and 9 g4 alike.

9...♗d7 10 h4 ♗c8 11 h5 ♗e5 12 0-0-0 ♖a5

Effectively, this isn't anything that we haven't already seen before. Sure, White has had the option of trading pawns on g6 but Black is ready to recapture with his f-pawn. Throughout *WSTD* I indicated that there is a slightly tenuous rule of thumb as regards where White's dark-squared bishop sits and whether Black continues without an f-pawn or an h-pawn. Although, ideally, Black would prefer fewer pawn islands and have his king avoid exposure along the b3-g8 diagonal, the fact is that ...hxg6 is often too risky if ♗(e3)h6 is available to White, as mate down the h-file could easily follow.

13 ♗e2



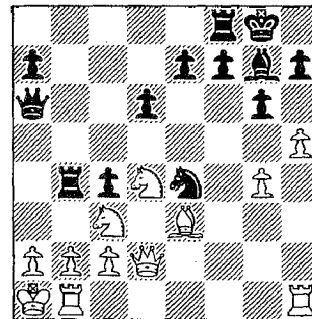
Bolstering the f3-pawn in anticipation of a withdrawal of the d4-knight. Instead 13 ♗b3 ♖c7 14 ♗e2 b5!? would be no different from the game.

13...b5!?

Black is only defending this pawn twice while there are three white pieces on hand to capture it. However, as White is rightly not interested in trading it for his a- or f-pawns, it is effectively off limits.

14 ♗b3 ♖c7

I like the text queen retreat, although the following encounter, witnessing the downfall of an up-and-coming young star, certainly caused quite a stir: 14...♖a6 15 ♖b1 ♗c4 16 ♗xc4 bxc4 17 ♗d4 ♖b8 18 ♖a1 ♖b4 19 ♖b1?! (A bit too passive for my liking. One obvious continuation that would be curtains for Black is 19 h6 ♗h8 20 g5 ♗h5 21 ♗d5. Clearly, somewhere along the line, Black would instead have to find a decent piece sacrifice.) 19...♗xg4!? 20 fxg4 ♗xe4



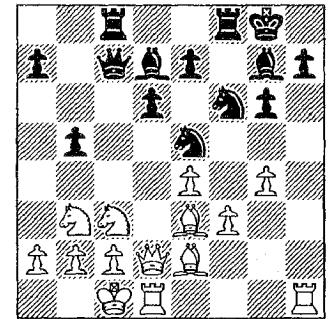
21 ♗xc4?? (Black has an initiative (and two pawns) for the piece, but White is certainly still in the game after 21 ♖e1. I've no idea what was going through the mind of the young soon-to-be Grandmaster, but his choice is a catastrophic disaster and no doubt more than a little

embarrassing too!) 21...♖xa2+!! 0-1 L.McShane-C.Duncan, 4NCL, Wigan 1997. Always look out for checks is what I advise juniors. I don't think I ever mentioned that to Luke though(!) and after 22 ♖xa2, 22...♖a4 is certainly quite a handy one!

15 hxg6

Again an exchange of pawns by 15 ♗xb5 ♗xb5 16 ♗xb5 ♗xf3 is certainly of no interest to White as his e- and g-pawns would then be sitting ducks too.

15...fxg6



Obvious holes on d5, e6 and f7 stand out in Black's position but his king is relatively safe and his rook is nicely activated on the f-file.

16 g5

I remember when I first studied this variation. I was on the train with a portable set plowing through some of Tiviakov's *Informator* manuscript 'B75-76'. Perhaps not as jazzy a title as some of the other books being read around me, but it was nevertheless proffering some interesting food for thought. The Russian super-GM had halted analysis on this variation a move ago with an assessment of 'slightly better for Black'. Naturally, though, I began speculating upon how Black would deal with White's attempts to

settle his knight on d5. Indeed, the game continuation follows, well not so much my 'home' analysis, as 'Brixton to London Victoria' analysis! However, first, it is definitely worth looking at the high-level tussle, A.Morozevich-A.Fedorov, Krasnodar 1997. That saw instead 16 ♖b1 b4 17 ♔d5 ♕xd5 18 ♖xd5+ e6 (With c2 hanging anyway and the fact that you are bound to have read chapter 2(?)), I'm sure that you guys would not fall for 18...♖h8?? 19 ♖xh7+!) 19 ♖d2 ♕xf3 20 ♖xf3 ♖xf3 21 ♖h6 ♖xh6 22 ♖xh6 ♖c6 23 ♖xb4 ♖f4 24 ♖a1? (Not helpful but Black has a clear plus in the endgame arising after 24 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 25 ♖xd6 ♖xe4.) 24...♖xe4 25 c3 e5 26 ♖a3 ♖cf8 27 ♔d2 ♖c2. Here White resigned: as well as his rook being attacked he has 28...♖a4 to deal with.

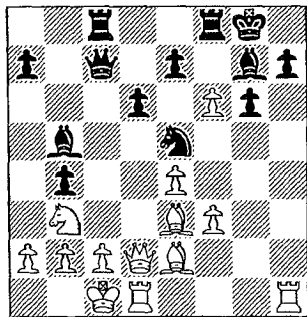
16...b4!

With a nifty sequence in mind.

17 ♔b5

After 17 ♔d5 ♕xd5 18 ♖xd5+ e6, White can't take on d6 because of the mate on c2. Hence 19 ♖d2, when 19...♕xf3 20 ♖xf3 ♖xf3 21 ♖d4 e5 22 ♖g1 ♖c4 23 ♖d5+ ♖xd5 24 ♖xd5 ♖f1+ 25 ♖d1 ♖xd1+ 26 ♖xd1 ♖g4+ 27 ♖d2 ♖f3 0-1 was P.Andersen-C.Ward, Politiken Cup, Copenhagen 1998.

17...♖xb5 18 gxf6

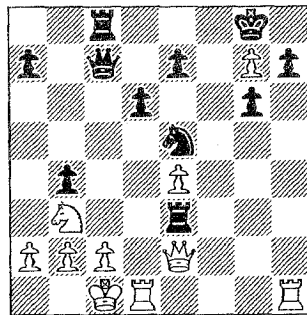


At first it looks as though White is simply winning material. Not so!

18...♖xe2 19 fxe7 ♖xf3!

The point. The white queen is about to be stretched as it must of course keep c2 protected.

20 ♖xe2 ♖xe3



Now, as well as being a pawn (soon to be two pawns) up, Black has no serious threats to his own king and is basically in complete control.

21 ♖h2

Being the generous guy that I am (!), while serving as an England coach during a World Junior Championship I imparted my knowledge of this variation to one of our representatives. To be honest, Richard had had a lousy time and had been moping around up until the following game. But after 21 ♖g2 ♖c4 22 ♖h2 ♕f3 23 ♖dh1 ♕xh2 24 ♖xh2 ♖h3! (0-1 R.Golts-R.Pert, Orapeso 1999) he was all smiles even though his own input towards this victory was quite minimal. It's funny how prepared variations often provide more satisfaction than hard graft over the board, but there is no doubting the tonic that a Dragon win can provide.

21...♖h3 22 ♖d2 ♖xb1 23 ♖xb1 ♖c4

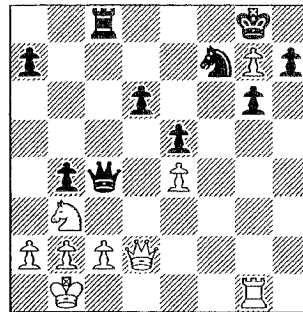
The black queen is brought to a more active post. While retaining

the attack on White's c-pawn, it now usefully eyes up e4, f1 and a possible retreat for defensive duties.

24 ♖b1 ♕f7 25 ♖g1

25 ♖h2 would be only a minor annoyance as both 25...h6 and 25...h5 adequately solve the problem of the h7-pawn.

25...e5

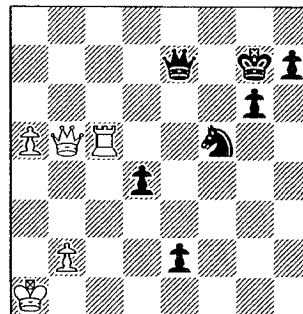


Cruelly keeping the white knight out of any seriously active duty. The game continues for some time but the outcome is never in doubt.

26 ♖f2 ♖xe4 27 ♖xa7 ♖xc2+ 28 ♖a1 ♖xg7 29 ♖f1 ♖c7 30 ♖e3 ♖g2 31 ♖g1 ♖d5 32 ♖e2 e4 33 ♖d1 ♖e5 34 ♖e3 ♕h6 35 ♖b6 ♖f7 36 ♖xb4 ♕f5 37 ♖e1 e3 38 a4 d5 39 a5 d4 40 ♕c5 ♖c7 41 ♖c1 ♖xc5

Unlike the bizarre late sacrifice of our last game, this one will most definitely prove successful.

42 ♖xc5 ♖e7 43 ♖b5 e2



Black has had two sets of connected passed pawns and here it is the central pairing that wins the day for him.

44 ♖e5 e1=♖+ 45 ♖xe1 ♖xe1+ 46 ♖a2 d3 0-1

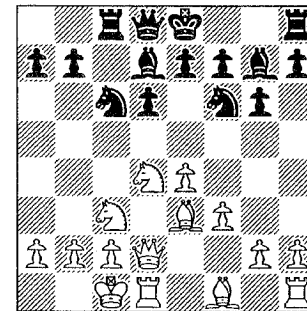
Game 5

D.Parr White

R.Pert Black

Hastings Challengers 2001

1 e4 c5 2 ♕f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♕xd4 ♕f6 5 ♕c3 g6 6 ♖e3 ♖g7 7 f3 ♕c6 8 ♖d2 ♖d7 9 0-0-0 ♖c8



Although this soon transposes to the system we have just been studying, there is certainly some mileage in the concept of delaying castling.

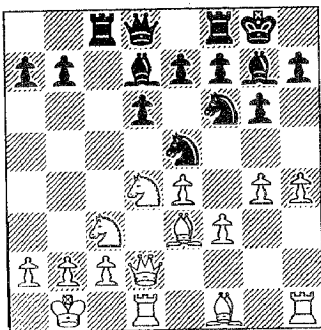
10 ♖b1 0-0

I discuss the pros and cons of this in a little while. Needless to say, though, Black could continue with 10...♖e5 and, with his king in the centre, be happy to advance ...h5, either to block White's h-pawn or challenge a white pawn on g4.

11 h4 ♕e5

Yes, consistent with comments throughout this chapter, I would have to say that 11...h5 is also quite reasonable.

12 g4



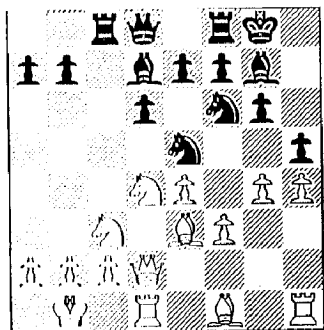
An interesting thought-provoking move-order has been used here. However, this is the starting position that I have been after though, with White effectively plumping for ♖b1 rather than h5.

12...b5

I have given this move because the present game provides some more entertaining and instructional tactics.

Alternatively, 12...♞a5 is playable as 13 ♔d5 ♞xd2 14 ♖xe7+ ♖b8 15 ♗xd2 ♞cc8 is not so clear. e.g. 16 h5 ♔xg4! 17 fxc4 ♖xe4, while 13 h5 ♔xf3! is what we've already studied. 13 ♗e2(!) is the current recommendation, although it doesn't look that frightening.

On a completely different tack, there have been very few practical outings with another possibility that I would like to discuss: 12...h5!?



Who knows, perhaps after the publication of this book the following variations, mainly concocted at home, might rise to become the cutting edge of latest Dragon theory. Alternatively, of course, it might just be more random analysis to be consigned to the scrap heap! Ultimately it is up to you, the reader, to decide what you think about:

a) 13 g5 (The knee-jerk reaction when Black plays ...h5 without having first castled. I could see this being a popular response although, arguably, in this situation, the other options show more aggression.) 13...♗e8 14 ♗e2 (Instead 14 f4 ♖g4 15 ♗g1 e5 16 fxe5 ♗xe5 demonstrates how the knight is more useful and has more potential on e8 rather than h7.) 14...♔c7 15 f4 ♖g4 16 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 17 ♞df1 e5 18 ♔db5 ♔xb5 19 ♔xb5 exf4 20 ♞xf4 ♗e5 which, because of the bishop-pair, was probably a little better for Black in F.Arp-W.Müller, Haarlem 2000.

b) 13 ♗h6 ♗xh6 14 ♞xh6 ♞xc3!?. Not perhaps 100% forced but White should suffer from a lack of a bishop on b3. Not only is the g6-pawn more stable as the f7 pawn isn't pinned, but the white king cover is a little flimsy.

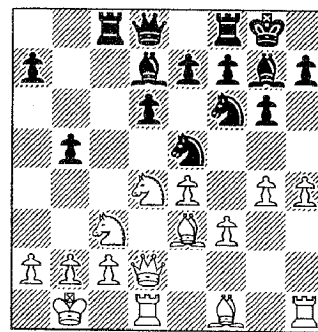
c) 13 ♔d5!? ♔xd5 14 exd5 ♞c5! 15 gxh5 ♞xd5 16 hxg6 ♔xf3 17 gxf7+ ♞xf7 18 ♞g2 ♞xd4 19 ♗xd4 ♔xd4 20 ♞xd4 ♗c6 21 ♞e4 ♞b6 22 b3 ♞c5 23 ♗c4 d5 looks very promising for Black. Hence 20 ♗c4 may be a better try but I doubt that Black is worse after, for example, 20...e6!? 21 ♞xd4 ♗c6 22 ♞g6 ♞f6—and note he is winning after 23 ♗xe6+?! ♖h8 24 ♞h5+ ♞h6.

d) 13 ♗e2 hxg4 14 h5 gxf3 15 h6 fxe2 16 ♞xe2 (White has nothing after 16 hxg7 exd1=♞+ 17 ♔xd1

♗xg7 as the knight is a useful blockader on the h-file.) 16...♗xh6 17 ♞xh6 ♗g4 18 ♞h2 ♗h5 when this time it's the bishop that foils White's h-file aspirations.

e) 13 ♗g5 hxg4 14 ♗xf6 (Upon 14 h5 Black could take that pawn too, while he can always meet 14 f4 with 14...♔f3.) 14...exf6 (Interesting, although it's not clear what White has after 14...♗xf6 15 ♔d5 ♗h8!, i.e. saving a key tempo in the event of a forthcoming h5-h6.) 15 h5 f5. Life is not looking too bad for Black when you consider the ...♔xf3 tricks available.

Of course, there is also 13 gxh5 ♔xh5 to consider and in fact I have only just touched the tip of the iceberg. Certainly food for thought but plenty of further investigations need to be made.



13 h5

If White is determined to snatch the b-pawn, then 13 ♔cxb5 is the way to do it. He must preserve his light-squared bishop in order to keep the critical c4 square under his control, while 13 ♔dxb5? leaves the f3-pawn *en prise*. There have been precious few practical encounters with this rather greedy move, although it is clear that it wouldn't be everyone's cup of tea. However we have:

13...♔xf3 (going for broke!) 14 ♔xf3 ♔xe4 15 ♞e1 ♗xg4 16 ♗g2 ♖b8 17 ♗d4 ♗xd4 18 ♔fxd4 ♗xd1 19 ♞xe4 ♗h5 20 ♔c6 ♞b6 21 a4 ♖be8 22 ♔bxa7 e6 23 a5 ♞f2 24 ♞f1 ♞g3 25 ♗f3 ♞h3 26 ♞d3 ♗xf3 27 ♞xf3 ♞xh4 as in the amazing game, J.Gallagher-A.Kalka, Castrop Rauxel 2001, which Black went on to win but practically every move threw up playable-looking alternatives for both sides, and

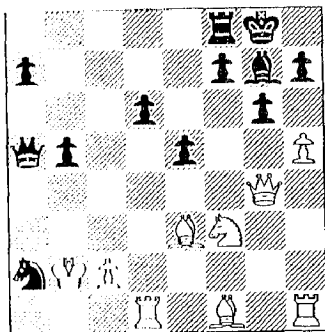
13...♞b8 (Though it is annoying from Black's point of view that it is this already developed piece moving again, it is of course logical to switch the attention immediately to the newly half-opened b-file. The b2-square is a future target, but for now the b5-knight being attacked twice means that the non-piece-sacrificing ...♔xf3 enters the equation.) 14 c4 (The most logical choice. After 14 ♔c3 Black has a most attractive combination in 14...♔xf3! 15 ♔xf3 ♔xe4! 16 ♔xe4 ♞xb2+ 17 ♖c1 ♞b1+!! 18 ♖xb1 ♞b8+ with mate on b2 to follow.) 14...a6 15 ♔c3 ♔xf3 (I suppose Black could simply claim compensation with a move like 15...♞c8, but the text ultimately leads to a most fascinating imbalance of material.) 16 ♔xf3 ♔xe4 17 ♔xe4 ♞xb2+ 18 ♞xb2 ♗xb2 19 ♖xb2 ♗xg4 20 ♗e2 ♞a5. Taking stock of the position White has a rook and three minor pieces for the queen. However his king is a little exposed and Black has an armada of pawns into the bargain. In C.Baker-R.Pert, 4NCL, Birmingham 2000, I would say (without bias of course!) that Black had the better of an eventual draw.

13...♔xf3

All part and parcel of this system, with the concept here being that Black is mainly on the trail of collecting pawns.

14 ♖xf3 ♕xg4 15 ♖e2

There is a nice tale behind the 15 ♖e2? ♜xc3 16 bxc3 ♖a5 17 ♖d4 e5 18 ♖c3 ♖xe4 19 ♖xg4 ♖xc3+ 20 ♖c1 ♖xa2 21 ♖b2



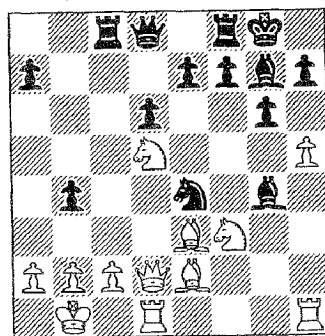
21...b4! 22 c4 ♖a3+ 23 ♖c2 ♖c3 24 ♖b1 ♖b3+ 25 ♖a1 ♖c3 0-1 of B.Savage-C.Duncan, British Championship, Nottingham 1996.

Such a sacrificial Dragon win isn't a rarity for English FM Chris Duncan, but his opponent was particularly humiliated by losing in this line, recommended for White in *Beating The Sicilian 3*. Shortly afterwards Ben Savage had the opportunity to play the famous Sicilian-basher, Grandmaster Dr John Nunn, and opted to play the Dragon himself in order to discover exactly where he had gone wrong. He must have had mixed feelings about the outcome. As Black he won in an almost identical fashion!

15...b4

Black could capture the h-pawn immediately but the text was the most fun to analyse when I first conducted investigations into this variation.

16 ♖d5 ♖xe4



17 ♖e1

Although provocative, it is possibly the case that 17 ♖xb4 ♖b8 18 ♖xe4 ♖xb2+ 19 ♖c1 (or 19 ♖a1 ♖a5!) 19...♖f5 is White's best continuation. You can imagine my excitement at then discovering 20 ♖xe7+ ♖xe7 21 ♖xe7 ♖xc2+ 22 ♖b1 ♖c5+ 23 ♖d3 ♖b8+ 24 ♖b7 ♖xb7 mate, but there are two important divergences:

a) 20 ♖c4 ♖xc2+ 21 ♖xc2 ♖xc2 22 ♖xc2 e6 23 ♖c3 ♖a5 is good for Black. Despite White having three minor pieces and a rook for a queen (and four pawns!) the next-up ...♖c8 should seal things in his favour.

b) 20 ♖xf5! gxf5 21 h6 when, as there are no satisfactory available squares for the bishop, it looks as though Black must settle for 21...♖xa2 22 hxg7 ♖e8. However, compared to (a) above, White's pieces are more coordinated and his king is safer.

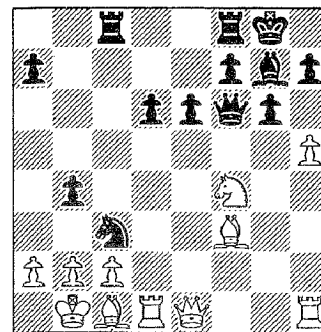
17...e6 18 ♖f4

Here too, White fails to get to the heart of the matter. 18 ♖h4!? looks more testing.

18...♖f6 19 ♖c1

Possibly White was expecting 19...d5, which is your typical piece-for-three-pawns position(!). However he is now in for a big surprise.

19...♖xf3 20 ♖xf3 ♖c3+!



21 bxc3 ♖xc3

With the b2-pawn no longer part of the equation, when the c3-rook moves, mate can be delivered on a1.

22 ♖b2 ♖b3! 0-1

While 22...♖b3 is a pretty move with which to end the game, in fact White should have really made Black prove a bit more. After 23 c3 ♖xb2+ 24 ♖xb2 ♖xf4 25 ♖e4 bxc3+ (or 25...♖f6!?) 26 ♖c2 ♖xe4+ 27 ♖xe4 d5 White will have to negotiate the old five connected passed pawns again but could at least give it a go.

However, instead 23...bxc3!? 24 axb3 c2+ 25 ♖xc2 ♖xb2+ 26 ♖d3 ♖b8 might be more problematic.

SYSTEM 2: 9...♖xd4 10 ♖xd4 ♖e6

Game 6

D.Tebb White

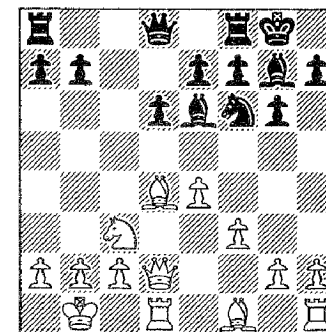
C.Ward Black

British Championship 1998

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 g6 6 ♖e3 ♖g7 7 f3 ♖c6 8 ♖d2 0-0 9 0-0-0 ♖xd4 10 ♖xd4 ♖e6

The point behind Black's quick knight trade in the centre. He now punishes White's decision to eschew 9 ♖c4 by taking control of the a2-g8 diagonal with his own bishop.

11 ♖b1

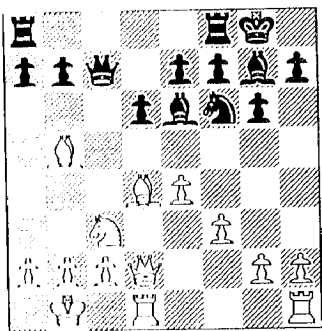


The advantage that White has with 9 0-0-0, rather than 9 g4, is illustrated by the text move. As Black can't play 11...♖a5 because of the 12 ♖d5 trick, White effectively gets this in for free. Now the manoeuvre ...♖c7, ...♖fc8 and then ...♖a5 is common, although White could take steps to intercept this plan by 11 ♖d5. Then 11...♖xd5 12 exd5 ♖c7 (12...♖d7!? 13 ♖b1 ♖f5 also doesn't look ridiculous. e.g. 14 ♖c3 ♖fc8 15 ♖d3 ♖xd3 16 ♖xd3 ♖d7 17 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 18 ♖e3 ♖f6 19 g4 h6 20 f4 g5 21 ♖h3 gxf4 22 ♖f1 ♖e5 23 ♖xf4+ ♖g5 24 ♖f5+ ♖g6 when Black's rock-solid knight ultimately helped him to victory in L.Cako-J. Van de Mortel, Groningen 1999.) 13 ♖b1 ♖fc8 would be standard when 14 c4 was met with 14...b5!? in R.Fontaine-E.Relange, Narbonne 1997. That game continued with 15 ♖xf6! (Not great but the point was that 15 cxb5 ♖xd5 16 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 didn't really leave the knight *en prise* in view of 17 ♖xd5?? ♖c2+ 18 ♖a1 ♖c1+) 15...♖xf6 16 ♖c1 (Upon 16 cxb5 a6!? 17 bxa6 ♖ab8 Black's compensation is clear. Note 18 b3 (or 18 ♖c1 ♖d7 19 ♖xc8+ ♖xc8 20 b3 ♖f5+! 21 ♖d3 ♖e5 with White suffering on the dark squares) 18...♖c3 19 ♖e3 ♖a5 all of a sudden threatens ...♖xb3+.) 16...♖b7.

Now White can't net a pawn anyway with 17 exb5 ♖xc1+ 18 ♔xc1 because of 18...♖c8+ 19 ♔b1 ♖c5 and so Black's pressure on White's queenside, and b2 in particular, eventually told.

Back to my initial point, the likes of 11 h4 ♖a5 12 ♔b1 ♖fc8 hardly makes sense for White who has basically thrown away a tempo and must quickly react to a big threat on a2. Worth observing now is how 13 ♔d5 ♖xd2 14 ♖xd2?!, as in Simon-Yurtsev Bratislava 1991, dropped a pawn to 14...♔xd5 15 exd5 ♔h6! 16 ♖d1 ♔xd5.

11...♖c7 12 ♔b5!?



This must go down as one of my favourite ever games. At the time it was played I hadn't actually seen this move before, although it is actually quite logical. Though playing 'into thin air', White's intention is a 13 ♔a4-b3 manoeuvre, where the bishop will offer some cover to the king and help challenge for the key d5 square.

12...a6 13 ♔a4 b5 14 ♔b3 b4

Though outwardly falling in with White's plans, I decided to force the white knight into an early decision.

15 ♔d5

Natural enough, but possibly not White's best. That said, although 15 ♔a4 ♖ab8 16 ♔xc6 fxe6 17 b3 has

since been played, the white knight looks a little offside.

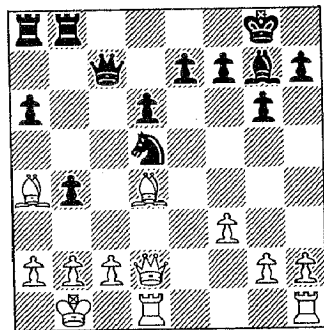
15...♔xd5 16 exd5

For those who are wondering, this is the correct way for White to recapture as he can now use the half-open e-file to pressurise Black's e-pawn. Although the light-squared bishop is now locked out, it does at least inhibit the e7-pawn from moving. Besides, upon 16 ♔xd5?!, not only is Black not obliged to take the bishop, but it could easily be hunted down by the black pawns.

16...♖fb8

On 16...a5, White would obviously be forced to respond with 17 ♔a4. However, this is necessary now anyway, otherwise 17...♖b5 would be very awkward. As this game proves, I was also not living in cloud cuckoo land when I decided that placing the rook on b8 would perhaps make possible a future ...♔c3+.

17 ♔a4 ♔xd5!?

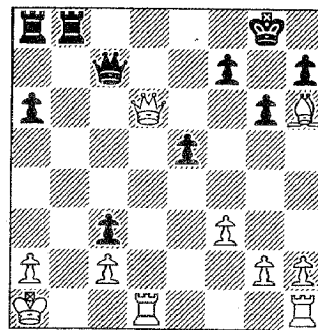


18 ♔xg7 ♔b6

The immediate 18...♔c3+ fails because, after 19 ♔xc3 bxc3 20 ♖d5 ♖xb2+ 21 ♔a1, White has the critical squares well defended.

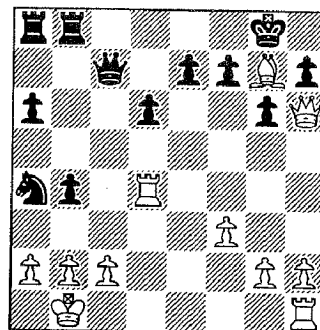
19 ♖h6

19 ♔h6 (or 19 ♖d4 ♔xa4 20 ♔h6) 19...♔xa4 20 ♖d4 e5 21 ♖xd6 ♔c3+ 22 bxc3 bxc3+ 23 ♔a1



23...♖b1+!, mating or winning the queen is one beautiful variation I had seen when playing the judgment call 17...♔xd5!?. However that was after first noticing that 20...f6? was grim on account of 21 ♖d5+ ♔h8 22 ♖f7 ♖g8 23 ♖he1. Then 23...♖a7 would be met by 24 ♔f8 and 23...♖ae8 splattered by 24 ♔g7+!. Naturally I wasn't enamoured by the prospect of an end-game (where the bishop is superior to the knight) after 21...♖xd6, but couldn't actually see a win against 22 ♔a1!. Indeed, such a variation wouldn't look out of place in a book entitled 'Drawing with the Dragon', but I won't spoil your enjoyment of this game by revealing why just yet (see notes to Black's 25th move).

19...♔xa4 20 ♖d4



Demonstrating that this encounter is by no means one-way traffic, this

carries the dangerous threat of 21 ♖h4. The thought of having to 'do a runner' with my king by means of a timely ...f6 did cross my mind, but instead I concentrated my efforts on a king assault of my own. Actually the attack that is drummed up from here is quite impressive although at this point I certainly hadn't seen to the end of the game. Nevertheless exactly that was suggested by those who later made such comments as "I guess you had it worked out from here on". Amazingly GM David Norwood, in his *Daily Telegraph* newspaper column, actually implied that this encounter, awarded the best game prize, might all have been home preparation!

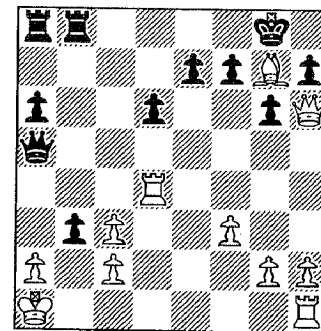
20...♔c3+! 21 ♔a1

21 bxc3 bxc3+ leaves Black two clear pawns up in the event of both 22 ♔c1 ♖b6 23 ♔d1 ♖b1+ 24 ♖c1 ♔xg7 and 22 ♔a1 ♖b6 23 ♖c1 ♔xg7.

21...♖a5 22 bxc3

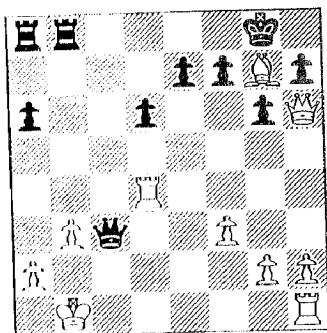
22 a3 bxa3 23 b3, which is the only other defence, leaves White material down after 23...♖b5, 23...♖b4 or even 23...♖h5.

22...b3

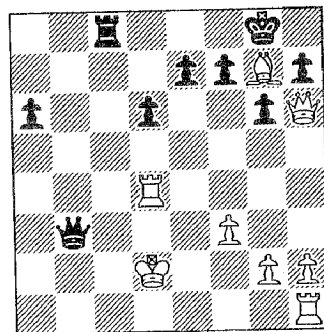


The key move. Black is clearing the way for his major pieces to enter the fray.

23 exb3 ♖xc3+ 24 ♖b1



endgame (though I suspected that 28...♖a2+ might be even better).
26...♞c8+ 27 ♖d2



24...♞xb3+!

No prizes for guessing this move, although my opponent wondered why I spent any time over it at all. The point is that the d4-rook is pinned and so I noticed that 24...♞c8 (intending ...♖c2+-c3+) would be sufficient for a draw. However it was unlikely that I was ever going to be able to resist the temptation of the text move anyhow!

25 axb3 ♖xb3+

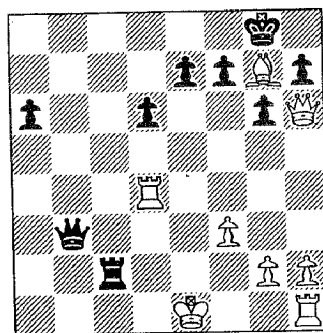
Okay, so earlier I had a 'feeling' that this position would be winning and, if not, I should have at least a perpetual. Reminding you of the notes to White's 19th move, after 22 ♖a1, I think that Black would have to force the draw by 22...♖a5+ 23 bxa3 b3 24 exb3 ♖xc3+ 25 ♖b1 ♞xb3 26 axb3 ♖xb3+ 27 ♖a1 ♖c3 28 ♖a2 ♖c2+ 29 ♖a3 ♖c3+ 30 ♖a4 ♖c4+ 31 ♖b4 ♖a2+ 32 ♖a3 ♖c4 etc. In contrast to the game continuation, the white queen would be far more prohibitive on d6.

26 ♖e1

Easier for me to calculate was 26 ♖a1 ♖a3+ 27 ♖b1 ♞b8+ 28 ♖c2 ♞b2 29 ♖d1 ♖a1+ 30 ♖c1 ♞b1 31 ♖d2 ♞xc1 32 ♞xc1 ♖a5+ 33 ♖d3 ♖xg7 with an excellent

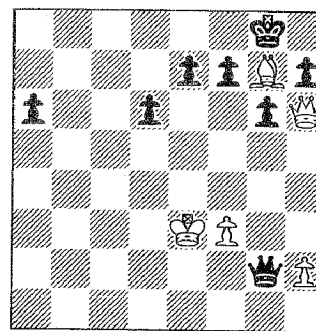
With 30 minutes remaining on my clock to reach move 40, here I slipped into deep thought, investing 25 minutes before bashing out the remaining moves. Many spectators had gathered and much whispering was going on. In that sort of situation, one is always a little paranoid that others can see something that you can't. However it all worked out okay and naturally I was quite chuffed with the final product.

27...♞c2+ 28 ♖e1



I realise that this may sound a little vague, but originally I had foreseen an idea whereby I exchange the active rooks and then pick off the one on h1 with a skewer. Indeed, leading to a position such as below,

I felt that I would have excellent practical chances with a queen and six pawns versus a queen, bishop and two (or even three).

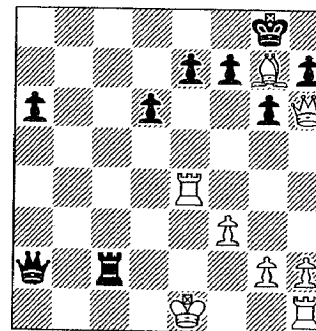


However, then thinking ahead to such a position, I uncovered a fantastic White resource. Sure 1 ♖d4 could be met in principle by 1...f6 or 1...e5, and 1 ♖f8 by 1...♖b2 No, the saving move is 1 ♖h8!! Then, not surprisingly, being unable to manoeuvre the queen to f8, I would have had to settle for a perpetual check anyhow.

Returning to the game position, actually it makes for quite a nice puzzle. One knows what one wants to do, it's just a matter of side-stepping the files and diagonals of the defending pieces.

28...♖e6+! 29 ♞e4

Forced, in view of 29...♖e2+.
29...♖a2!

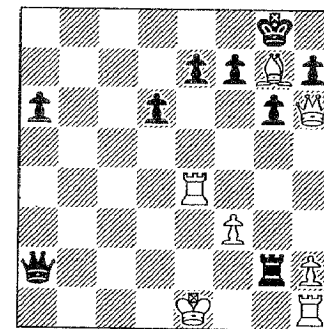


Phase two. Now the white rook is no longer on the d-file, it is not available to stop 30...♖b1+.

30 ♖f1

Now Black is in seventh heaven. There is no time to return with 30 ♞d4, because of 20...♞e2+ 31 ♖f1 ♞f2+ 32 ♖g1 ♞xg2+ 33 ♖f1 ♖f2 mate.

30...♞f2+ 31 ♖e1 ♞xg2!



Again a 'lawnmower'-style checkmate is threatened via a queen to the 8th rank.

32 ♖c1 ♖f2+ 33 ♖d1 ♖xf3+ 0-1

The e4-rook drops and then mate follows.

Game 7

N.McDonald White

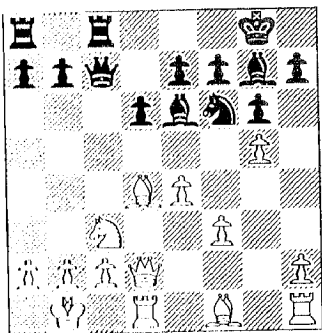
R.Webb Black

4NCL, Birmingham 1998

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 g6 6 ♖e3 ♖g7 7 f3 0-0 8 ♖d2 ♖c6 9 0-0-0 ♖xd4 10 ♖xd4 ♖e6 11 ♖b1 ♖c7 12 g4

By transposition we have already seen 12 ♖d5 ♖xd5 13 exd5 ♖fc8 but, while I'm here, also of interest is the 13...♞ac8 14 ♞c1 a6 15 g4 e6 16 dxe6 fxe6 17 g5 ♖h5 18 ♖h3 ♖f4 19 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 20 ♖g4 d5 of S.Kindermann-M.Jirovsky, Baden 1999. The knight is preferable to the bishop and Black went on to win with 21 h4 ♞cd8 22 ♞ce1 e5 23 h5

pxh5 24 ♔xh5 ♚f5 25 ♚eg1 ♚g8 26
 ♚g6 h6 27 ♔g4 ♚g5 28 ♚h2 ♚h8 29
 ♚h3 ♚h5 30 ♚g3 ♚e7 31 ♚d2 ♚f8
 ♚a3 ♚f6 33 ♚h2 ♚b6 34 ♚a1 ♚c5
 35 ♚f5 ♚xf5 36 ♚xh6 ♚d4 37
 ♚h7 ♚g8 38 ♚c1 ♚ff6 39 g7 ♚g6
 40 ♚xp6 ♚xg6.
 12...♚fe8 13 g5

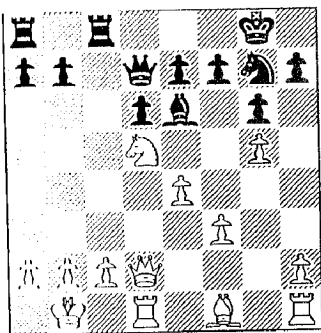


This game features the positional approach, with White angling for an endgame advantage rather than mate.

13...♚h5 14 ♔xg7

14 ♚b5 ♚d8 15 ♔xg7 ♚xg7 16 ♚d4 ♚c5 is nothing for Black to fear.

14...♚xg7 15 ♚d5 ♚d7!



As explained in *WWTD*, Black is right to put up with the knight for the time being. Though tempting, to alleviate the slight discomfort, an immediate capture on d5 would

provide White with swift control of the h3-c8 diagonal.

16 h4

I find it funny that the last time I featured this variation was when IM Philip Morris was handling the White pieces. This time it was his pal and study partner GM Neil McDonald. Both supposedly friends of mine, no doubt together they plotted my downfall with this system! Frankly it serves both of them right that they should therefore come unstuck, Neil in this game and Phil with 16 f4 b5 17 ♔e2 ♚c5 18 ♔f3 ♚ac8 19 ♚c1 ♔xd5 20 exd5 ♚f5 21 ♚hf1 ♚h5 22 ♔xh5 gxh5 23 ♚f2 ♚xd5 24 ♚e2 e6 25 ♚xh5 ♚d4 26 ♚f3 d5 27 b3 b4 28 ♚e3 ♚e4 29 ♚xa7 ♚xf4 30 ♚b7 ♚xf2 31 ♚xc8+ ♚g7 32 h4 ♚h2 33 ♚c5 ♚xh4 34 ♚g1 ♚h2 35 ♚c1 ♚f4 36 ♚g1 ♚h5 37 ♚f1 ♚xg5 38 ♚xf4 ♚xg1+ 39 ♚b2 e5 40 ♚xb4 e4 41 ♚b7 h5 42 ♚d7 e3 43 ♚e7 d4 44 c3 d3 0-1 P.Morris-S.Hansen, Gausdal 1992 (as annotated in *WWTD*).

Attempting to establish a Maroczy bind with 16 c4 may appear logical but after the 16...♚c5 17 ♚d4 ♚ac8 18 ♔d3 ♔xd5 19 cxd5 e5! of M.Chandler-W.Watson, London 1990, being unable to capture *en passant* due to an inevitable loss of a pawn, White was left with a bad bishop.

16...♚c5 17 f4 ♚ac8 18 ♚h2

The problem with 18 c3 is that the king is left exposed along the b1-f5 diagonal. Not only is 18...♚f5 then playable but 18...♚h5 creates a serious problem for White's f-pawn. Black is ready to trade on d5 and plant his queen on f5 and there is no obvious solution.

18...♔xd5 19 exd5 ♚xc2!

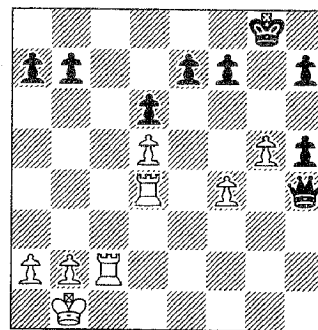
Black correctly judges that, owing to a few loose white pawns, the

queen vs two rooks endgame is going to be most favourable for him.

20 ♚xc2 ♚xc2 21 ♚xc2 ♚h5 22 ♚d4 ♚g4

The f-pawn looks to have earned a temporary reprieve but the h-pawn won't be so lucky.

23 ♔e2 ♚xh4 24 ♔xh5 gxh5!



Disturbing the pawn structure in order to create an immediate passed pawn.

25 a3 ♚g4 26 ♚a2 h4 27 ♚f2 h3 28 ♚dd2

The doubling of rooks on the second rank means that for now the progress of the dangerous h-pawn is put on ice. However, while White has simply tucked his king out of harms way, the enemy monarch will have a far greater hands-on role.

28...♚g3 29 ♚b1 ♚g7 30 ♚c2 b5 31 ♚f1 ♚e3

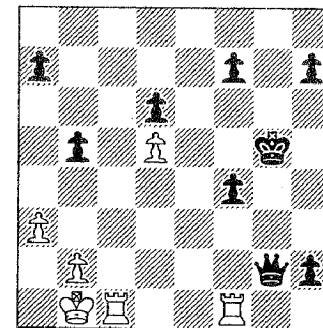
Black was no doubt enjoying this position. He has plenty of time to probe with his queen, while at each turn White must be careful not to drop something.

32 ♚d1 ♚g6 33 ♚e2 ♚d3+ 34 ♚e1 ♚g3+ 35 ♚d2 h2 36 f5+

Desperation. Trying to defend this ending has been painful for White. Instead 36 ♚e1 would also be grim. Black could immediately pick off another pawn by 36...♚g2+ 37

♚c3 ♚xd5, even before his king makes a telling appearance on the scene.

36...♔xg5 37 f6 exf6 38 ♚c2 ♚g1 39 ♚e1 ♚g2+ 40 ♚b1 f5 41 ♚e1 f4 0-1



It's true that isolated pawns are less of a nuisance to rooks than connected pawns. However here, paired with the queen, Black's h- and f-pawns are more than adequate. One blatant winning plan is ...f3-f2 and ...♚g1. White's only defence then would be to have one rook on h1 and one on f1; a completely paralysing scenario.

Okay, so I'm not sure that your average Russian super-GM reading this (and there's bound to be lots!?) will be too impressed about the conditions under which the following game was played. Sure, it was a rapidplay encounter and my consultation partner wasn't the Rogers of the Australian GM variety (nor for that matter the English FM of Elephant gambit fame) and sure, it was played in a coaching session. But Fritz was Fritz—if not the latest version nor running on the fastest PC. Anyway, I think the game is quite instructive.

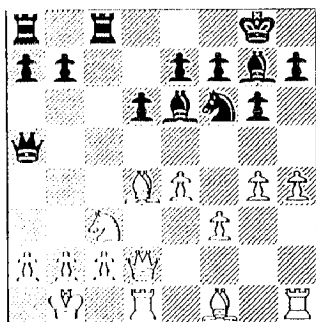
Game 8

Fritz White

C.Ward/M.Rogers Black
Bromley Rapidplay 1999Black went on to win in
O.Brendel-V.Werner, Bern 1999.

14...♖ab8

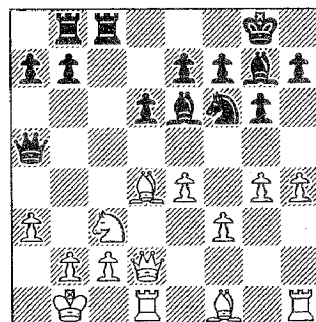
1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4
 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 g6 6 ♖e3 ♖g7 7
 f3 0-0 8 ♣d2 ♗c6 9 0-0-0 ♗xd4 10
 ♗xd4 ♖c6 11 ♗b1 ♣c7 12 h4
 ♖f8 13 g4 ♣a5



Thanks to the rook being on c8 rather than f8, the black queen has been able to come out to its favourite position. 14 ♗d5 would achieve nothing now (and any ♗xe7+ would drop a piece to ...♗f8) but White has a threat to deal with.

14 a3

The currently popular 14 ♣g5 is covered in detail in the next game but other than that it should be noted that White ignores Black at his peril, e.g. 14 h5?! ♖xc3! 15 ♣xc3 ♣xa2! 16 ♗c1 ♖h6+ 17 ♖c3 ♖c8 18 ♣xc8+ (After 18 ♣e1 Black has several attractive continuations but I especially like 18...♗b3 19 ♖d3 ♖xc2 20 ♖xc2 ♣a4 21 ♖h2 ♣a1+ 22 ♗d2 ♣xb2 23 ♖c1 ♣d4! 24 ♖d3 ♖xc1) 18...♗xc8 19 ♖xh6 ♖xg4! 20 ♖d3 (or 20 fxe4 ♗xc4 21 c3 ♣a1+ 22 ♗c2 ♣a4) 23 ♗c1 ♗f2, when White will drop too many pawns) 20...♣a1+ 21 ♗d2 ♣a5! which



A flowing move and another reason why it is the f8-rook that often goes to c8. Now that White has moved a pawn in his castled position, there is an obvious target. Yes, ...b5-b4 suggests itself as a plan, when the creation of a half-open b-file could easily be disastrous for White.

15 ♗e2

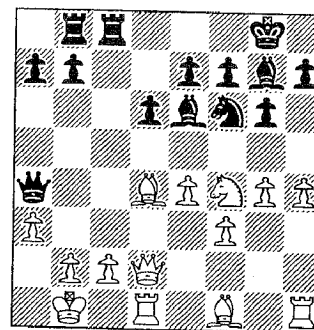
Hardly in the spirit of the opening, but nonetheless a safe way for White to continue. Though I'm personally not that convinced, it's fair to say that many strong players believe that a trade of queens here leaves White with a slight plus. Though I am insinuating that White is bottling it with the text, there is some justification for this. Indeed it is now risky for White to continue with his attack, since, with a black rook on the b-file ultimately ready to hit b2, it's not clear that the 'free' move ♗b1 isn't detrimental. After 15 h5 b5, not that long ago I had a game go 16 h6 b4 17 ♗b5 ♖xb5 18 ♖xb5 ♣xb5 19 hxg7 bxa3 20 ♖h2 axb2 21 ♖xb2 ♖b8 22 c3 a5 23 c4 ♣xc4 24 ♣xa5 ♣b3 25 ♖e1 ♣xf3 26 ♖he2 ♖xg4 27 ♣a7 ♣d3+ 28 ♗a1 ♣b5 29 ♖c2 ♖e6 30 ♣xe7

♣a5+ 0-1 (R.Harris-C.Ward, London league 1999). However there are several deviations to consider. In that game White should have tried 20 ♣h2 as the theme 20...♖xg4 21 ♖xf6 ♖h5 doesn't work because of 21 ♖d5xh5. Also probably wiser is 17 ♗d5 (as discussed in *WWTD*) as after 17 ♗b5 the simple 17...♖h8 is probably better, e.g. 18 ♣xb4 ♣xb4 19 axb4 ♖d7!? with reasonable counterplay. Of course 16...b4 isn't forced either, with 16...♖h8 a perfectly reasonable alternative. However, take a look at the 15 ♖d3 b5 16 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 17 ♗d5 b4! 18 ♗xf6+ exf6 19 g5 ♣a4 20 b3 bxa3 0-1 of R.Costantini-C.Aldrovandi, Montecatini Terme 2000 (there is impending doom on b3). You can see why opening the b-file ASAP appears so attractive.

15...♣a4!?

The obvious drawback of this move is that, after 16 ♗c3, it is doubtful that Black has better than 16...♣a5, thus questioning just how much of a winning attempt it is. Nevertheless I guess it doesn't hurt to allow at least one repetition, when the true colours of both players could shine through!

16 ♗f4



The main idea behind 15 ♗e2 and certainly better than 16 h5?, which

is exposed by 16...♖h6!. White must keep c2 guarded.

16...b5!?

Naturally my view is that White was extremely fortunate that 16...♗xe4?! didn't work in M.Adams-C.Ward (as the current World no. 4 confessed that he hadn't seen it coming). Alas, after 17 fxe4 ♖xd4 18 ♗xe6 (and definitely not 18 ♣xd4 ♣xc2+ 19 ♗a1 ♣c1+ leading to mate!) 18...♖e3 19 ♗d3! (The only move, but a good one. White is struggling after 19 ♣xe3 ♣xc2+ 20 ♗a2 ♣xd1.) 19...fxe6 20 ♖h3 (Eyeing up the e-pawn. With the rooks connected, now Black's bishop is essentially *en prise*.) 20...♖f4 21 g5 ♖c5 22 ♖xe6+ ♗g7 23 ♖b3 things weren't great! In the Dragon, it is unusual to see a light-squared bishop exerting dominance over a dark-squared one, but this is one minority case. The reason here is that the pawns on black squares, combined with his bishop, provide White's king with excellent cover, while the black king is looking decidedly holey! Returning to specifics though, in fact 23 ♖d1 ♖f8 24 h5! would have been even more to the point, e.g. 24...♖xg5 25 h6+ ♗h8 26 ♖xf4 ♖xf4 27 ♣c3+, leading to mate, but still White went on to win (M.Adams-C.Ward, 4NCL England 1996).

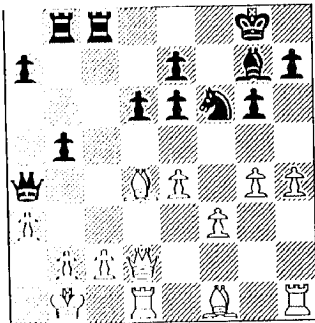
Another sacrifice, 16...♖xc2?!, also fails because, after 17 ♣xc2 ♖a2+ 18 ♗c1 ♖b3, White spoils the fun by 19 ♣c7!. However, although the more patient text move seems fine, it's possible that donating a third piece might be successful. Indeed, I quite like the look of 16...♖xg4! 17 fxe4 (Instead 17 ♖xf6 ♖xf3 18 ♖xg7 ♖xh1 19 ♖h3 ♖xc2! 20 ♣xc2 ♖xe4 21 ♗d3 ♣xc2+ 22 ♗xc2 ♗xg7 leaves Black

with an attractive four pawns for the piece.) 17...e5! 18 g5 ♖xe4 19 ♖g2 ♖g3! The pressure remains on c2 and it's amazing how dangerous 20 b4 ♗xa3 21 ♗xg3 exd4 is. Black only has three rather unconvincing pawns for a piece, but the dual threats of ...d3 and swinging a rook up and along to the a-file are incredibly strong.

17 ♖xe6

After 17 g5 ♖xe4! 18 fxe4 ♙xd4 (remember this can't be taken immediately in view of the mating 19...♗xc2-c1!) 19 ♖xe6, Black need not recapture the knight as he has the distinctly dangerous-looking alternative of 19...♙c5! 20 ♖d4 b4.

17...fxe6



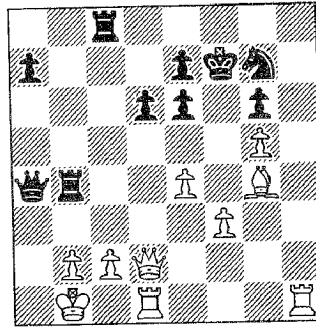
18 h5

If the present game is anything to go by, then it seems that White doesn't have time for this and should instead settle for trying to shut up shop with 18 g5 ♖h5 19 ♙h3 ♖f7 20 ♙xg7 ♖xg7 21 c3. However it's not really clear what White is doing, while Black can continue trying to prise open the white monarch, starting with 21...a5.

18...b4 19 hxg6 hxg6

As White's attack looks a little slow, this is totally acceptable, although, of course, 19...bxa3 shouldn't be ruled out.

20 g5 ♖h5 21 ♙h3 ♖f7 22 ♙xg7 ♖xg7 23 axb4 ♗xb4 24 ♙g4



White dreams (well, if that's what computers do!) of coming down the h-file, but completely underestimates the carnage that awaits his own king. However, to be fair, with Black set to pounce on either b2 or c2, there is little that White can do to defend.

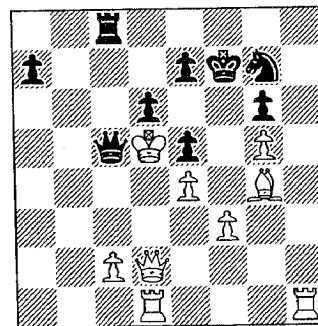
24...♗xb2+

The most visual option, although 24...♗cb8 is also rather impressive.

25 ♖xb2 ♗b8+ 26 ♖c3 ♗a3+ 27 ♖c4

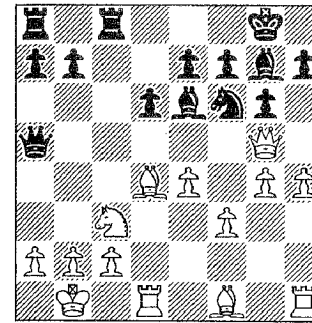
For a metal box this is a response surprisingly lacking in resistance. However, perhaps the machine just found 27 ♖d4 ♗b4+ 28 ♗xb4 ♗xb4+ too painful to contemplate!

27...♗c8+ 28 ♖d4 e5+ 29 ♖d5 ♗c5 mate.



Game 9 S.Ernst White J. Van de Mortel Black Groningen Open 1995

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 g6 6 ♙e3 ♙g7 7 f3 0-0 8 ♗d2 ♖c6 9 0-0-0 ♖xd4 10 ♙xd4 ♙e6 11 ♖b1 ♗c7 12 g4 ♗fc8 13 h4 ♗a5 14 ♗g5



An odd-looking move which, to my shame, once caught me off guard when I hadn't been keeping up with the latest theory. White puts a temporary stop to Black's ...♗xc3 threats by offering a trade of queens.

14...b5!?

The point is that an immediate queen exchange improves White's kingside pawn structure as the new pawn on g5 is a thorn in Black's side and the newly half-opened h-file clearly a useful asset. Having been bitten once before, I would now shy away from the likes of 14...♗xg5 15 hxg5 ♖d7 16 ♙xg7 ♖xg7 17 ♗h4 f6 18 gxf6+ ♖xf6 19 g5 ♖h5 20 f4 ♗f8 21 f5 ♖g3 22 fxe6 which is supposed to be theoretically good for White. However, recently Black chose to fight the cause and in that respect I guess was ultimately successful with 22...♗xf1

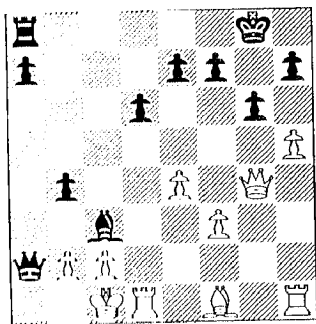
23 ♗xf1 ♖xf1 24 b3 ♖d2+ 25 ♖c1 ♖f3 26 ♗g4 ♖d4 27 ♖d5 ♗e8 28 ♖f4 ♗c8 29 ♖d2 ♖xc2 30 ♖d5 ♖d4 31 ♖xe7 ♗e8 32 ♖d5 ♖xe6 33 ♖e3 ♖d8 34 ♗h4 ♗e5 35 ♖f6 ♗xg5 36 ♖e8+ ♖g8 37 ♖xd6 ♗g2 38 e5 ♗xa2 39 ♗c4 ♖f8 40 ♗c7 ♗a3 41 ♗xh7 ♗xb3+ 42 ♖f2 a5 43 ♗d7 ♖e6 44 ♗f7+ ♖g8 45 ♗f6 ♖c5 46 e6 ♖xe6 47 ♗xe6 ♖g7 48 ♗e7+ ♖f6 49 ♗xb7 ♗xb7 50 ♖xb7 a4 51 ♖c5 a3 52 ♖e4+ ♖f5 53 ♖c3 ♖f4 54 ♖d5+ ♖e5 55 ♖c3 ♖f4 56 ♖d5+ ♖e4 57 ♖b4 ♖e5 58 ♖e3 g5 59 ♖f3 ♖d6 60 ♖g4 ♖c5 1/2-1/2 in I.Yagupov-I.Arakelov, St Petersburg 2000.

When a new White line comes along, the fun revolves around uncovering an exciting recipe for Black. I can recall spending a lot of time on a snowy mountain-top hotel in Gausdal analysing the text pawn sacrifice. Along with a couple of Norwegian GMs (who, come to think of it, were maybe IMs at the time), we eventually dismissed 14...d5 as being not so promising and concentrated on 14...b5!. However, I remember wondering what exactly the white queen is doing on g5 should Black simply retreat with 14...♗c7. Indeed, I have since had many blitz games continue 15 h5 h6! 16 ♗d2 g5 which is most satisfactory for Black as f3-f4, to crack open the kingside, is a little impractical. Ironically, I also remember reading somewhere that White should play 15 ♙d3 and 'ask Black what he is doing'. I don't buy that as surely a slow build-up is sufficient (e.g. 15...a6 facilitating a ...b5 that wouldn't be a pawn sac) when White's own intentions should be back under the microscope. Interestingly, the most popular choice is the

repetition 15 ♖d2 when, after 15...♗a5 16 ♖g5, Black should either take the draw or go for it as in the text. Note I have cheated slightly here, as in fact in the main game Black did engage in one ...♗c7-a5 repetition to show who was boss, before going for it!

15 ♖xb5

White must take the pawn now and go on the defensive. Not only is the white queen awkwardly placed for an attack but, after 15 h5?, traditional attacking themes work, e.g. 15...♞xc3! 16 ♔xc3 ♖xa2! 17 ♔c1 b4 18 ♔d4 (or 18 ♔xb4 ♔xe4!) 18...♔xp4! 19 ♔xf6 ♔xf6 20 ♖xg4 ♔c3!



The above leads to mate while 15 a3?! would also be an admission that 14 ♖g5 has failed, with 15...♞ab8 16 h5 h6 17 ♖d2 b4 18 ♔a2 ♖a4 looking very powerful in view of 19 ♔xb4 ♞xb4!

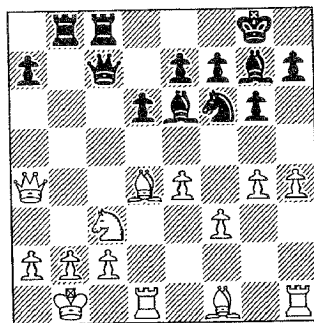
15...♗c7 16 ♖a4

A sensible pre-emptive queen retreat. This appeals more than 16 ♖a6 ♞ab8 17 ♔b5 (Alternatively 17 ♔a1 ♔xc4 18 fxe4 ♔xd4 19 ♞xd4 ♞xb2 20 ♖xc8+ ♔xc8 21 ♔xb2 ♖b6! 22 ♔b5 a6 23 ♞b4 axb5 24 ♔xb5 ♔xg4 25 a3 ♔f3 is preferable for Black who indeed went on to win in P.Stoma-J.Slaby, Kazimierz Dolny 2001.) 17...♔xe4

18 fxe4 ♔xd4 19 ♞xd4 ♞b6 when, with ...a6 to follow, Black will regain his piece (e.g. the pinned knight on c3) and retain his attack.

The obvious downside of White's expenditure of time with his queen, effectively to notch up the b-pawn, is that now the position is full of tricks, e.g. 16 g5 ♔xe4! 17 fxe4 ♞ab8 18 ♖a4 ♔xd4 19 ♖xd4 (or 19 ♔b5 ♔d7!) 19...♖xc3 20 ♖xc3 ♞xc3 with a better endgame for Black.

16...♞ab8



17 ♔a6

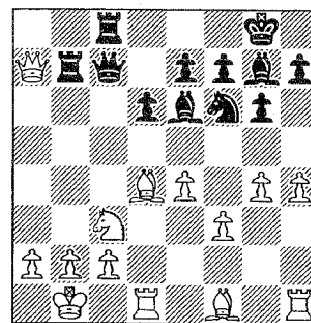
The above diagram depicts a critical position for this whole variation and poses the big question of whether or not Black has enough compensation for the pawn. I suspect he has, but you can make up your own mind after checking out some of my analysis, both on the selected move and the alternatives. As regards those, I think that we can eliminate three White options:

17 h5 ♔d7 18 ♔b5 (Or 18 ♖xa7 e5! 19 ♖xc7 ♞xc7 when White either offloads a piece or things look pretty grim after 20 g5 exd4 21 gxf6 dxc3 22 fxc7 ♞xb2+ 23 ♔a1 ♔e6) 18...♖b7 19 hxg6 hxg6 20 ♖xa7 ♔xb5 with a whole extra piece;

17 ♔b5?! ♔d7! 18 c4 (Or 18 ♞d2 ♖b7!) 18...a6 with a winning position and

17 ♔b5 ♔xe4! 18 fxe4 ♔xd4 19 ♞xd4 a6 20 ♖xa6 ♞a8 21 ♖c6 ♖b8, trapping the white queen.

However, an obviously critical variation is the further grab of material, 17 ♖xa7, when, after 17...♞b7, White must make a decision on his queen (though it ends up on a3 anyhow!):

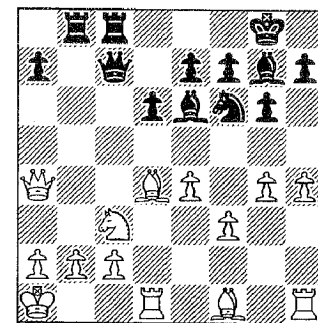


a) 18 ♖a4 ♔d7! 19 ♖a3 (19 ♔b5 looks a bit suspicious, e.g. 19...♔xe4 20 fxe4 ♔xd4 21 ♞xd4 ♔xb5 22 ♔xb5 ♞xb5) 19...e5 20 ♔a6 exd4 21 ♔xb7 ♖xb7 22 ♞xd4 ♔xe4! 23 ♔xe4 ♔xd4 24 ♔xd6 ♔xb2! 25 ♖xb2 ♖xf3, when White has an exposed king with loose pawns and pieces!

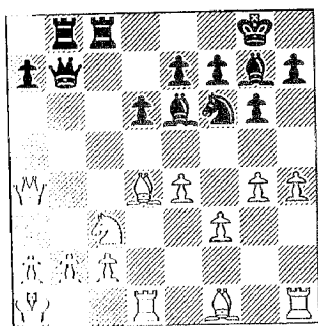
b) 18 ♖a3 ♔d7!/? (With the half-open a- and b-files to utilise there is always going to be practical compensation. One fantasy variation that I can recall looking at is 18...♔xe4 19 fxe4 ♔xd4 20 ♞xd4 ♖xc3 21 ♖xc3 ♞xc3 22 g5 ♔xa2+ 23 ♔xa2 ♞xc2 24 ♔c4 ♞xb2+ 25 ♔a3 ♞h2 26 ♞f1 ♞b2 27 ♞xf2 ♞xf2 when, with the white king so out of play, it is unlikely that Black

should lose.) 19 ♔xg7 ♔xg7 20 ♔a1 (If 20 ♔a6 then 20...♞a8! while 20 ♔b5 ♔e5 21 f4 ♔xg4 22 ♞d2 ♖b6 23 ♞e1 ♔g8 seems to end well for Black.) 20...♞cb8 21 ♞h2 (Defending c2. There is no satisfactory method of holding b2, bearing in mind the fragile position of the white queen.) 21...♞a7 22 ♔a4 (ugly but forced!) 22...♔e5 and White has all sorts of problems.

Also a major consideration must be the fittingly cautious 17 ♔a1.

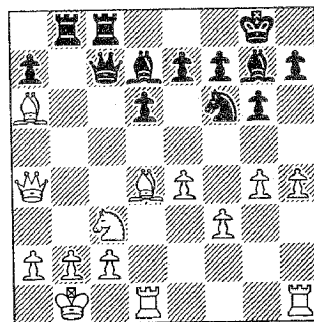


Then 17...a5 has been afforded an '!' by several sources, with the ensuing 18 ♔b5 ♖b7 19 ♞b1 d5 quite logical. However, as the 20 g5 ♔h5 21 ♔xg7 ♔xg7 22 exd5 ♔xd5 23 ♔a6 ♖xa6 24 ♔xd5 ♔f5 25 c3 ♞c5 26 ♖e4 ♖b7 27 ♞hd1 a4 28 h5 ♞b5 29 ♞d2 a3 30 b3 ♞c8 31 c4 ♞xd5 32 ♞xd5 ♖b6 33 ♞bd1 e6 34 ♞5d2 ♔e3 35 ♖xe3 1-0 of N.Lakos-J.Shahade, Istanbul Olympiad 2000, would appear to indicate, Black is in dire need of a serious improvement somewhere in this line. White seemed to retain the extra pawn and Black made no serious inroads towards the white monarch. Instead, I am more interested in the complications of 17...♖b7!?. Then some possibilities include:



Hopefully all that should provide you with at least a good starting point from which to begin your own investigations.

17...e7

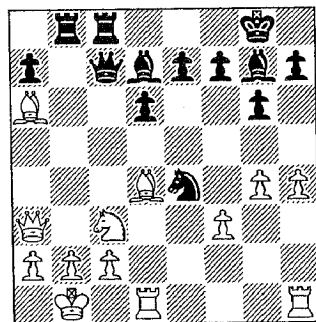


The text is fine but also 17...dxe4!? must be worthy of consideration, e.g. 18 fxe4 (or 18 dxe4 e7) 19 Wa3 Wxc2+ 20 a1 e4 with that big back rank problem again) 18...e4 19 b5 xb5 20 e5 with reasonable compensation (thanks to the raking bishop-pair) for the exchange.

18 Wa3

Instead 18 b5 e5 19 e5 b5! 20 e5 Wxc2+ 21 a1 dxe4 22 fxe4 (or 22 e5 g7 f2) 22...e4 leaves Black's remaining three pieces coordinating perfectly.

18...dxe4



a) 18 Wa3? e4
 a1) 19 e4 Rxc4 20 e3 (20 d3 Bb4 21 d1 is a bit passive.)
 20...e4 21 fxe4 e3 22 bxc3 Ra4 23 Wb3 Wc8 with dual threats on the queen and c3;

a2) 19 h5 e4 20 Rxf1 Rxc4 21 h5 g6 h5 22 d3 Bb4 23 d1 (23 Bb1 dxe4 24 e5 g7 e5 25 e6 dxd3 26 cxd3 Wf3 leaves Black with the more dominant position.)
 23...Wc6 24 c3 Ra4 bags the queen;

b) 18 b3 Wb4 19 b2 dxe4! (Rather than 19...dxe4 20 Wxb4 Rxb4 21 e5 g7 f2 22 d4 Rxd4 23 e4 d4 24 e2 g3 25 e2 h5 26 e5 g3 h5 27 f5 g4 e5 p1 in which the two pieces are preferable to the rook.) 20 Wxb4 Rxb4 21 e5 g7 f2 22 d4 Rxd4 23 e4 d4 24 e2 g3 25 e2 h5 26 e5 g3 h5 27 e4 h1 Rxb4 28 e2 a6 with an unclear situation thanks to the outside passed h-pawn.

c) 18 Bb1 Wb4 19 Wxb4 (or 19 p5 Wxa4 20 dxa4 Bb4 21 gxf6 Rxd4 22 f5 g7 Rxa4 where there is an additional handy trap of 23 b3 Rxc2!) 19...Rxb4 with:

c1) 20 d1 e4?

c2) 20 e5 a7 dxe4!! 21 dxe4 (Or 21 a3 Rxc3) 21...Rxc2 with a massive attack.

c3) 20 e3 dxe4 21 f5 g4 Rxc3 22 e2 d2 Ra4!, threatening mate, is a nice resource.

19 e8

Clearly 19 dxe4 Wxc2+ 20 a1 e4 is bad news for b2, as the back ranker prevents 21 Rxd4. Alternatively, though, 19 fxe4 e4 20 Rxd4 Wxc3 21 Wxc3 Rxc3 is possible, when only 22 e5 saves White from being comfortably worse.

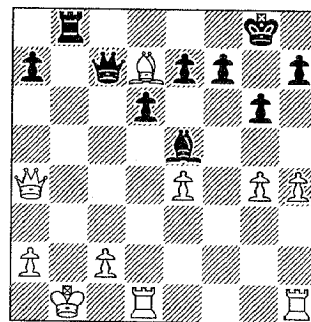
19...e4 20 fxe4

Clearly not liking 20 dxe4 e5 21 Wxb2 Rxb2+ 22 e5 b2 e8, White tries to escape with a material advantage. Well, he gets a material advantage, but he doesn't escape!

20...e3 21 e4 d7 e5 22 Wa4

Pretty grim is the endgame, 22 Wxb2 e5 23 e5 b2 Wd7, as the white king is exposed to checks and one of the g- or e-pawns drop immediately.

22...e5+



23 e5

23 e1 e4+ 24 d2 Wc3 threatens an unstoppable mate on a1, as well as the rook!

23...Wc3 24 e1 a6 25 d1

The attacked bishop couldn't move in view of 25...e4+ or 25...Bb1+, both rather convincing!

25...e5 26 d1

Running from the rook sacrifice. However, Black's next move locks in the king and even White's

apparent attempts to sour the finish don't really spoil the party.

26...Wc3 27 Wd4 Bb1 mate.

Game 10

H.Kummerow White

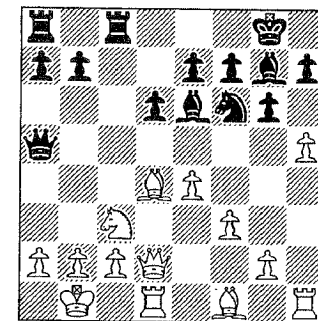
S.Sievers Black

German Bundesliga 1997

1 e4 c5 2 d3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 dxd4 d6 5 e3 g6 6 e3 e7 7 f3 c6 8 Wd2 0-0 9 0-0-0 dxd4 10 e4 e6 11 b1 Wc7 12 h4 f8 13 h5

Finally, we get to White getting to the point! Immediately he sets about prising open the h-file.

13...Wa5



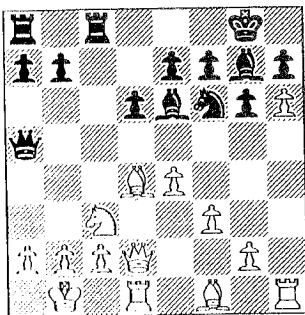
It is definitely worth taking note of the fact that, at this juncture, 13...d5? is asking for trouble, since 14 e5 g7 e5 15 g4 d6 16 Wb6+ e8 17 e5! dxe5 18 g5 d5 19 d3 is virtually a forced win.

14 a3

Certainly 14 e6? Rxc3! 15 Wxc3 Wxa2+ 16 e1 e6+ 0-1, as in the miniature G. Ruiz Gonzalez-R.Molander, Budapest 1999, is a mistake and I would still argue that 14 h5 g6 h5 6 (although 14...f5 6 remains a candidate) 15 a3 is one of the most critical continuations of the whole system. However, the fact remains that it is simply lacking in

practical outings and a recent encounter of my own left me with an insight as to why that might be.

Although I was on the verge of getting this crunch line in a tussle with a likeable Israeli super-GM, in fact after much consideration he whipped out the old line 14 h6.

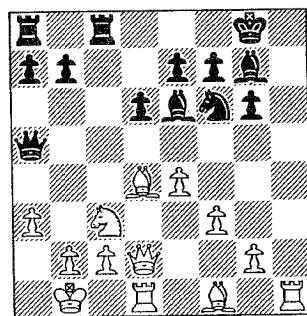


Play continued with 14...h8 15 a3 (Having sealed off the h-file it is clear that White will be seeking a queen trade. I suppose the immediate 15 d5 is possible but 15 exf6? hoping for 15...exf6? 16 d5 falls foul of 15...xc3. The text guards the a2-square, safe in the knowledge that Black won't have time for

b5-b4.) 15...d7 16 d5 (Having got this far, White should at least contain the black king to the corner by playing 16 exh8 first. Of course it can return later and so I'm not unduly worried about Black's position.) 16...Wxd2 17 Hxd2 Qxd5 18 exd5 (If 18 exh8 now, then Black has an intermediate 18...xe4.) 18...exd4 19 Hxd4 f5! (I thought a long time about this ugly looking move. It may weaken the e6-square but it has several plus points. The main idea behind it is to intercept White's space-gaining g4-g5 plan. The f7-square is made available to the black king and the white

d4-rook would have to move twice to attack e7.) 20 g4 fxg4 21 fxg4 Qe5 (This is an excellent square for the knight while the black rooks have options on the c- and f-files.) 22 g5 Qf3 (White will not have time to implement Qh3-e6.) 23 Hg4 Hc5 24 Qg2 1/2-1/2 L.Psakhis-C.Ward, Copenhagen 2000. After 24...Hf8 25 Qxf3 Hxf3, Black possibly has a slight edge, but I was feeling generous!

Chatting to me after the game, Lev suspected that reaching the position below was perhaps a little risky for the 'unprepared' White player, as home study would surely offer Black something. Sure, perhaps I had one or two things up my sleeve, but it's an honour to be credited in this way.

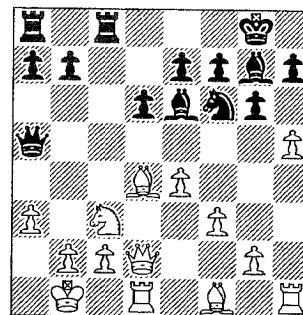


From the above position there has been the odd anti-climax along the lines of 15...ab8 16 d3 Qc4 17 Qxf6 Qxf6 18 d5 Wxd2 19 Qxf6+ Qg7 20 Qh5+ gxh5 21 Hxd2 Qxd3 22 cxd3 Qg6 or 17 Qxc4 Hxc4 18 Qxf6 Qxf6 19 d5 Wxd2 20 Hxd2 Qg5 21 f4 Qf6 (Actually 21...e6 22 fxg5 exd5 23 Hxd5 Hxe4 24 Hxd6 Hg4 25 Hd7 Hxg2 26 Hf1 Hf8 27 Hxb7 Hxg5 28 Hxa7 f5 looks a bit more exciting.) 22 g4 He8 23 g5 Qg7 24 He2 f6 25 b3

Hc5 26 Hf1 Qf7 27 Hd1 1/2-1/2 A.Touloumis-G.Nikolaou, Greece 1998.

These endgames don't exactly set the board on fire and, for 17th move alternatives, more in the spirit of things is the 17 Hh3 b5 18 Wg5 (Or 18 Hdh1 e5 19 Qe3 b4 with some serious action!) 18...e5 19 Qxc4 Hxc4 20 Qf2 Hxc3 21 bxc3 Wxa3 of B.Stillger-M.Repplinger, Bayer Open, Leverkusen 1997.

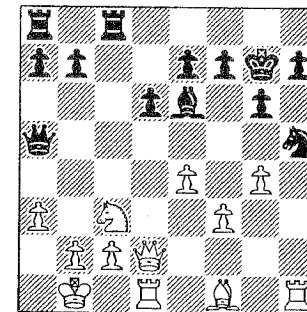
In addition, White could try the typical 17 g4, or perhaps 17 Qe3 with a quick Qh6 in mind, while Black has other available ideas too. In *WWTD* for example I was sceptical of 16...b5 in view of the pin of the b-pawn by 17 Wg5!. Indeed, then 17...Qh7? unfortunately loses on the spot to 18 Hxh7! Qxd4 19 Hdh1, as it's nothing but bad news down the h-file. Also 17...Wc7 has been given a rough time by 18 e5! but there is plenty of room for further investigations. For example, as Black, who wouldn't be attracted by the likes of 17...Wd8 18 Qxa7 Hb7 19 Qd4 b4 20 Qa6 bxc3 21 Qxb7 Hb8 22 Qa6 Hxb2+ 23 Qc1 Wb8 24 Qxc3 Qxe4!! Just a fantasy variation, I know, but I have observed plenty of them!



14...Qxh5!

With the c8 rook ready to pounce on c3, the situation is now significantly different from that given in my comments to Black's last move.

15 Qxg7 Qxg7 16 g4



16...Hxc3!

A vital insertion as 16...Qf6? 17 Wh6+ Qg8 18 Qd5! Qxd5 19 exd5 Hc5 20 g5 Qh5 21 Hxh5 gxh5 22 Qd3 would again be curtains.

17 Wxc3+

Upon 17 gxh5, a timely queen trade is offered with 17...Hc5. Obviously, without that pawn on h5 White would have 18 Wh6+, but it is there and so he doesn't! Instead 18 Wd4+ f6 achieves nothing, while b2-b4 can never be played because of ...Wxa3.

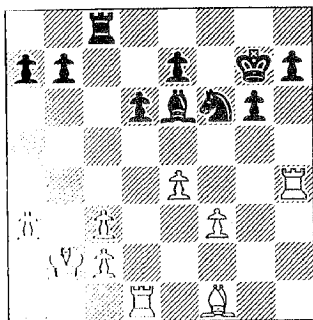
17...Wxc3 18 bxc3 Qf4

And so, effectively, we have an exchange sacrifice that was food and drink for Black in chapter 5. Having the knight already on f4 is just a bonus.

19 g5 Qh5

A temporary retreat to facilitate either of the ...f6 or ...h6 pawn breaks which will ultimately allow the black king to make an entrance.

20 Hh4 Hc8 21 Qb2 f6 22 gxf6+ Qxf6



23 ♖d3

Even after 23 ♖h3 ♖xh3 24 ♞xh3 g5 you would have to say that the practical chances are with Black.

23...♞e5 24 f4 ♖g4 25 ♞e1 h5

This pawn will be White's downfall.

26 ♞b2 ♖h6

I would say that 26...e5!?, aiming to secure two connected passed pawns, is even stronger but Black manages to achieve that anyway.

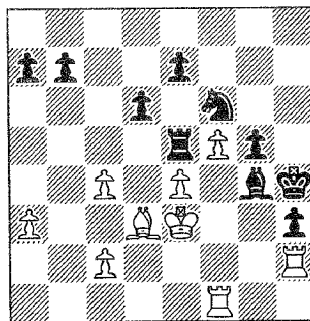
27 ♞f1 g5 28 f5?!

To be honest, nothing looks great for White, but this is suicide.

28...♞e5 29 ♖c1 h4 30 ♖d2 ♖h5
31 c4 h3

Black has no interest in the e4-pawn.

32 ♖e3 ♖h4

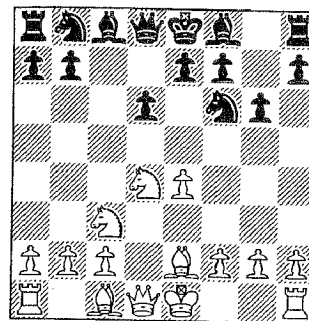


This is more than adequate, although the tactic that Black engages in next move would also work now.

33 ♞ff2 ♖xf5 34 ♞xf5 ♖g4+ 35 ♖e2 ♖xh2 36 ♞f8 g4 37 ♖f2 g3+ 38 ♖g1 ♖g4 39 ♖e2 g2 40 ♞f4 ♞g5 41 ♖d1 e5 42 ♞f8 ♖h6 0-1

8 The Classical Dragon

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 g6 6 ♖e2



This chapter on the 'Classical Dragon' is the most difficult for me to write and hence probably the most difficult for the reader to get to grips with. The problem is the amount of transpositions that can occur. Although at first I considered these to be rather a nightmare, I believe that I have now managed to isolate certain relevant subtleties between variations. Consequently, as you will soon see, I have supplied a quick reference menu for those wanting to get stuck straight into the nitty gritty.

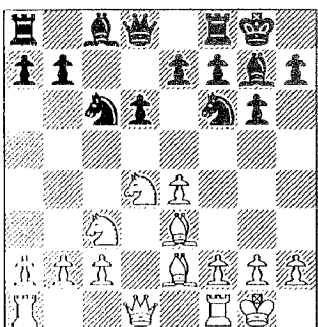
The Yugoslav Attack is the most critical line against the Dragon, but it is not everyone's cup of tea. Basically, I have recognized the 'Classical' to be anything involving an early ♖e2 (most likely 6 ♖e2, but different move orders are a consideration). Amongst the 'quieter'

White 1 e4 players, the Classical is a very popular choice. Although it is of course very possible for Black to lose, the move 6 ♖e2 is not especially fearsome to Dragon (and indeed most Sicilian) players. To expand on this, and to confuse the reader a little more, Classical Sicilian players often choose to transpose into the Classical Dragon! i.e. 1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 ♖c6 6 ♖e2 (as we saw in chapter 3, both 6 ♖g5 and 6 ♖c4 prevent the Dragon) 6...g6 is a very common move order.

From the positions in the next two diagrams, there are several plans that Black can adopt, though much may depend on the stance that White takes. Queenside expansion is a frequent option, with ...a6 and ...b5 featuring regularly. Very playable, but not dwelt upon in this chapter, is ...a5 (when the white knight has retreated to b3), intending ...a4-a3. Nearly always this is met by a4, when the relative weaknesses of the b4- and b5-squares must be weighed up. Usually Black's light-squared bishop vacates the c-file to go to e6, where it eyes up the c4-square. This can be followed up by ...♞c8 (slowing down White's f4-f5), but my own recommendation here is that this square should be reserved for a rook. Possibilities of an exchange sacrifice on c3 then enter the equation, while an

occupation of the c4-square with a knight or bishop is facilitated.

Due to a lack of experience in my earlier Dragon days, I believed the real starting position of the Classical Dragon to be as below.



Black has played all of the normal Dragon moves and, with only his light-squared bishop to sort out, now threatens the thematic 9...d5. If allowed, this pawn break will open up the Dragon bishop's diagonal and the new lines created may expose White's centrally posted pieces. White is well advised to take preventive measures, but his main alternatives make concessions of their own:

Game 1: 9 f4 If unaware of Black's reply, this is arguably White's most natural continuation. He is ready to meet 9...d5? with 10 e5! but is now temporarily vulnerable along the a7-g1 diagonal. The accurate treatment is 9...♖b6! with several tactics surfacing.

Game 2: 9 ♗d2 Not, strictly speaking, completely stopping 9...d5, but the idea that ♗ad1 may soon follow is certainly some sort of deterrent. In moving, the queen has

relinquished its control over the g4-square which offers Black the opportunity to hunt down a white bishop with his knight. Indeed, Black can strike while the iron is hot with 9...♗g4!?, although you will notice that I have concentrated on a less forcing possibility.

Games 3 and 4: 9 ♖b3 A sensible retreat that vacates the d-file, enabling the queen to guard d5. The drawback for White is that this knight no longer controls the e6-square. This means that Black's only undeveloped minor piece now has at its disposal an active post, and so 9...♗e6 is a highly satisfactory response.

After 10 f4 ♗c8!?, Game 3 rushes in with 11 f5 while the cautious 11 ♖h1 is the subject of Game 4.

Whilst I'm here, a couple of White tries do not look stupid, but fail to deal with the matter at hand. They are:

a) 9 ♖h1?! d5! and now:

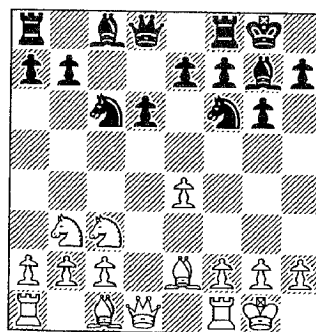
a1) 10 exd5 ♖xd5 (also, more recently, quite attractive was the 10...♗b4!?) 11 d6 ♗xd6 12 ♗db5 ♖b8 13 a3 ♗c6 14 ♗d4 ♖xd4 15 ♗xd4 ♗g4 16 ♖f4 ♗e5 17 ♖a4 ♗xe3 seen in R.Mammadov-L.Abdennabi, Dubai 2000) 11 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 12 ♗f3 ♖a5 13 ♗xc6 bxc6 14 c3 ♖b8 15 ♖c1 ♖c7 16 ♗d1 ♗f5 17 ♗d4 e5 18 ♗c5 ♗fd8 19 ♗xd8+ ♗xd8 20 ♖e3 ♗d3 21 ♖e2 ♖d7 (threatening both 22...♗d2 and 22...e4) 22 ♖e1 ♗xf3!! 23 gxf3 ♖d5 24 ♖e3 ♗h6! 25 c4 (25 ♖xh6 ♖xf3+ 26 ♖g1 ♗e4+ leads to mate) 25...♗xe3 26 cxd5 ♗xc5 27 dxc6 ♗b6 and, with a rather easy task, Black went on to win the ending (Pesotsky-C.Ward, Kiev 1990).

a2) 10 ♗xc6 bxc6 11 e5 ♗e4!?

12 ♗xe4 dxe4 13 ♗xd8 ♗xd8 14 ♗fd1 ♗e6 15 ♗d4 f5 16 a4 ♖f7 17 a5 ♗xd4! 18 ♗xd4 ♖b8! 19 f4 exf3 20 ♗xf3 ♗xe5 21 ♗d3 ♖xb2 22 ♗e1 ♗d6 23 ♗xc6 ♗xc2 24 ♗d5 ♗xd5 25 ♗xd5 ♖a2 26 g3 ♗b4 27 ♖b1 ♗xa5 and Black capped a brilliant display by cruising to victory in the endgame (M.Adams-A.Khalifman, Las Palmas 1993).

b) 9 h3 d5! 10 exd5 ♖xd5 11 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 12 ♗xc6 (In the same fashion as the previous line, 12 ♗f3 ♖a5 13 ♗xc6 bxc6 gets White nowhere. Black has an isolated c-pawn, but is well compensated for this by the pressure against White's queenside. Indeed after, say, 14 ♗xc6?! ♖b8, White will lose his b-pawn, leaving him with the isolated c-pawn.) 12...♖xc6 13 c3 e5 14 a4 ♗e6 15 ♖c2 f5 16 f3 a6 and Black's kingside space advantage gives him a slight edge (Rizvi-C.Ward, Lloyds Bank, London 1991).

These days I realise that my original concept of the Classical Dragon, though nicely wrapped up, is in truth somewhat narrow. Indeed, it appears that most diversions start from the position below.



White has retreated his knight to b3, away from central tactics, in order to give his dark-squared bishop alternatives. Of course 9 ♗e3 is still possible (and transposes directly into Games 3 and 4) but, alternatively, with nothing to support on d4, it may venture further afield to g5, ultimately to pressurise the e7-pawn. The other popular choice is to leave it temporarily on c1, in order to keep its options open. Although again one must take into consideration various move-orders (e.g. 8 ♗g5 ♗c6 9 ♖b3), White's possibilities (and my suggested responses) may be basically summarised as follows:

Game 5: 9 ♗g5 a6!? 10 a4

Game 6: 9 ♗g5 a6!? 10 f4 b5 11 ♗f3

Game 7: 9 ♗g5 a6 10 ♖h1 or 9 ♖h1 a6 10 ♗g5

Game 8: 9 ♖h1 a6 10 f4

Game 9: 9 ♗e1

Note that, from the previous diagram, 9 f4 is a little premature as it allows the immediate 9...b5!. This is based on the premise that 10 ♗xb5?! is very favourably met by 10...♗xe4! 11 ♗xc6 ♖b6+. Instead play may continue with 10 ♗f3 b4 11 ♗d5 (if 11 ♗a4!?, then 11...e5! 12 a3 a5 13 ♗e3 ♗a6 14 ♗e1 ♗b5 makes White's pieces look a little uncoordinated) 11...♖xd5 12 exd5 ♗a5, when either 13 ♖h1 ♗c4 or 13 ♗xa5 ♖xa5 leave Black with a comfortable position. The f-pawn would rather be back on f2, where it keeps the king covered and does not obstruct the c1-bishop.

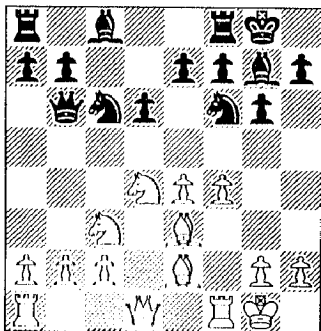
Finally, Game 10 is altogether different from the above two diagrams. Nevertheless it covers not uncommon, but rather uncharacteristically aggressive lines in which White delays or foregoes the usual 0-0 in favour of an early attack against the black king.

I understand that, up to now, the reader may have been a little confused with what they have read in this chapter. Do not worry, so have I at times! Do read on, but never lose sight of the fact that you should always try to play your own game. Put into practice all of the ideas, but avoid bashing out previously learnt, but not understood moves in case of memory lapses. You may not grasp all of the Classical transpositional features at first. If you do, then all the better, but if you don't, just remember some ideas and revisit the intricacies later.

Game 1

L.Hansen White
J.Aagaard Black
Taastrup 1999

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♘f6 5 ♗c3 g6 6 ♖e2 ♖g7 7 ♗e3 0-0 8 0-0 ♗c6 9 f4 ♖b6!

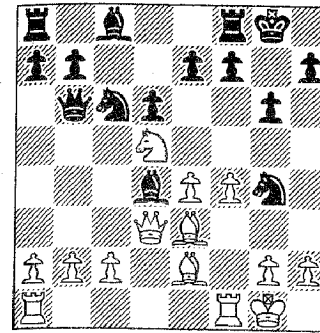


At first it may appear foolish to voluntarily place the queen along the same diagonal as White's dark-squared bishop. However, on b6, it harbours dual threats. The blatant attack on b2 is the get-out clause if White attempts the discovered attack 10 ♗f5?. Indeed, after 10 ♗f5 ♖xb2, White finds both his knights simultaneously attacked. He can capture the Dragon bishop with 11 ♗xg7, but then 11...♖xc3, hitting the bishop on e3 as well as the trapped g7-knight, means Black will surface a piece up. Another major point is the pressure built up on White's d4-knight. Black is threatening the simple unleashing of the Dragon bishop by ...♗xe4 which would, for example, be the recipe for treating 10 ♖d2?!

10 e5

Initiating the 'Zollner Gambit' (also known as 'a bag of tricks'!). If Black negotiates a minefield of tactics with limbs still intact (as he does in this game) then he will emerge with a clear advantage.

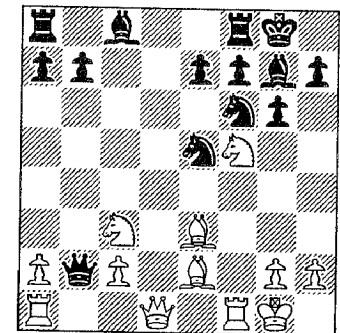
Regarding Black's pawn-winning threats, one attempted solution is 10 ♖d3. Then the pawn on b2 looks a little poisoned (it's certainly not clear, but many would be worried about getting their queen trapped after 10...♖xb2), while 10...♗xe4?? fails to the intermezzo 11 ♗xc6. However, 10...♗g4 then continues the theme (now attacking d4 three times) when 11 ♗d5 (It has to be said that 11 ♗xg4 ♗xd4 12 ♗xd4 ♖xd4+ 13 ♖xd4 ♗xd4 14 ♗xc8 ♖axc8 15 ♗f2 isn't exactly a thrill-a-minute, but the pressure on the c-file gives Black something to go on.) offers Black the possibility of a positional queen sacrifice by 11...♗xd4!



12 ♗xb6 (In all fairness White probably shouldn't accept it. Nevertheless I notice that Black's results have been very reasonable after 12 ♗xg4 ♗xe3+ 13 ♖xe3 ♖xe3+ 14 ♗xe3 ♗xg4 15 ♗xg4. What's more, some greedy guzzlers have been successful venturing into 13...♖xb2, e.g. 14 ♗xc8 ♖fxc8 15 ♖ab1 ♖xc2 16 ♖fc1 ♖a4 17 ♖xb7 e6 18 ♗f6+ ♖g7 19 e5 ♖d4 20 ♖xd4 ♗xd4 21 ♗d1 dxe5 22 fxe5 ♗d8 23 ♗f1 ♖ab8 24 ♗c7 ♖bc8 25 ♖b7 ♗e2+ 26 ♖h1 ♗c1 27 ♖xc1 ♗xc1 28 h4 ♗xa2 29 ♖xa7 ♗b4 30 ♖b7 ♗d1+ 31 ♖h2 ♗c6 32 g4 ♗xe5 33 g5 h6 34 ♖g2 hxg5 35 hxg5 ♗d8 36 ♗c7 ♗d3 37 ♖f3 ♗b4 38 ♖b7 ♗d5 39 ♗g4 ♗c8 40 ♗h6 ♗c7 41 ♖b8 f5 42 ♖g8+ ♖h7 43 ♖e8 ♗c3+ 44 ♖f2 ♗f4 45 ♖f1 ♗c7 46 ♗g8 ♗h3 47 ♗f6+ ♖g7 48 ♖xe6 ♗xg5 49 ♖b6 ♗c2 50 ♗d5 ♗f3 51 ♗f4 ♗h4 52 ♗e6+ ♖h6 53 ♖b8 ♖h5 54 ♗f4+ ♖g5 55 ♗e6+ ♖h5 56 ♗f4+ ♖g5 57 ♗e6+ ♖f6 58 ♖b6 ♖a2 59 ♗f4+ ♖g5 60 ♗e2 f4 61 ♖b4 ♗g2 62 ♖f2 ♖f5 63 ♖f3 ♗h4+ 64 ♖f2 g5 65 ♖f1 ♖g4 66 ♖f2 ♗f5 67 ♗c4 ♗g3 0-1 K.Grosar-Z.Velicković, Bled 1999.) 12...♗xe3+ 13 ♖h1 ♗xb6 14 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 15 h3 (The advantage of the three pieces was also highlighted

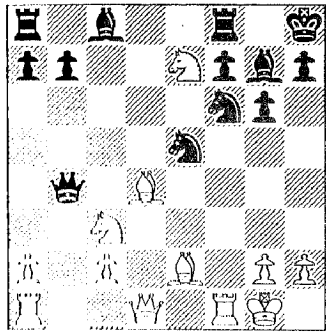
well in *WSTD* after 15 c3 ♗e6 16 b4 ♖ac8 17 h3 ♗fd8 18 ♖g3 ♗c4 19 ♖fel d5 20 f5 d4 21 e5 dxc3 22 fxc6 hxg6 23 e6 ♗xb4 24 ♖f4 f6 25 ♖h6 ♗d3 26 ♖ad1 ♗f5 27 ♗d7 ♗d5 28 g4 ♗d3 29 g5 fxc6 30 ♖xg5 ♗f5 31 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 32 ♖e5 ♗e3, Javarone-Poli, Italian Championship 1991/92) 15...♗d7 16 f5 (An attacking move that endeavours to get White's rooks into action. Alas, the only real outcome is donating the cozy outpost on e5 to the black knight and some awesome pressure on g2 for a couple of rooks and a bishop.) 16...♗e5 17 ♖d2 gxf5 18 exf5 f6 19 ♖f4 ♖f7 20 b3 ♗c6 21 ♖e1 ♖g7 22 ♖e2 ♖h8 23 ♖h2 ♖ag8 24 g4 h5 25 ♖g3 hxg4 26 h4 (A painful move to have to play. It's only a matter of time now before Black's armada of pieces find their way into White's position.) 26...♖h7 27 ♖xe5 dxe5 28 ♖xg4 ♖xg4+ 29 ♖xg4 ♖g7+ 30 ♖h3 e4 0-1 Estrada Degrandi-Emma, Tramandai zonal 1978.

10...dxe5 11 fxe5 ♗xe5 12 ♗f5 ♖xb2!



Greedy, but best, as now the c3-knight is attacked.

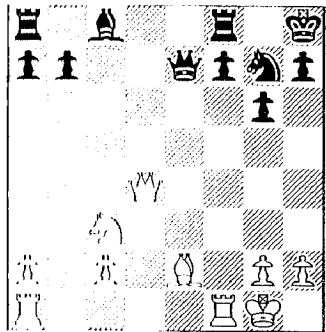
13 ♗xe7+ ♖h8 14 ♗d4 ♖b4!



Again, a very accurate move. Sure, the e7-knight is hit, but with the text, Black also pressurises the d4-bishop while avoiding any discovered attacks.

15... Qxc5
15 Qxd5 Qxd5 16 Qxd5 Wxd4+ !
17 Wxd4 Qf3 18 Qxf3 Qxd4+ is a neat tactic that nets Black an exchange to supplement his extra pawn, while, after 15 Qxc8 , a key move is 15... Qd8 !

15... Wxc7 16 Wd4 Qh5 17 Qxg7+ Qxg7



18 Kae1

Yes, and with 18 Qd3 Qe6 instead (Hazelton-C.Ward, London Lloyds Bank 1985), was I pleased with having worked out all these precise moves to leave myself a pawn up with other positional advantages to boot? Well no(!), but I

was chuffed at having managed to reconstruct theory that I had once learned parrott fashion as a junior (I mean an even younger junior!). Who says that memorising reams of theory isn't beneficial to your chess?

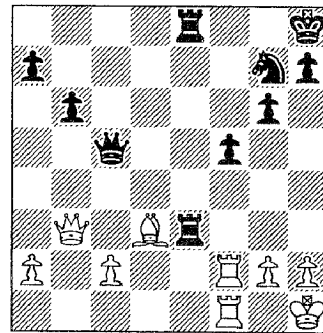
18... Qe6 19 Qd5 Qxd5 20 Wxd5 Kad8 21 Wb3 b6

Black has a superior pawn structure and is of course, thanks to White's generosity, already a pawn up. The only odd-looking thing is the fianchettoed knight, but this is soon sorted out.

22 Qh1 Wc7 23 Kf3 Kde8 24 Kf2 f5 25 Kd1 Wc5 26 Kdf1 Ke3

White has not been able to improve his position, while Black now steps up a gear.

27 Qd3 Kfe8



Dominating the main open file and already setting up possibilities of back rank mating tricks.

28 Wf7 K3e7 29 Wb3 Qh5

Now the knight starts making its way into the action and, boy, does it soon make an impact.

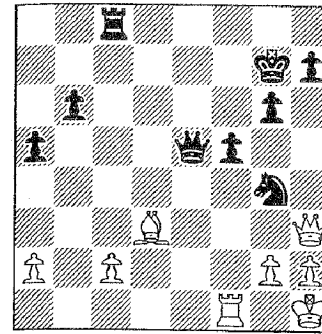
30 Qb5 Qf6

Cute! The rook isn't effectively *en prise* on e8 because of 31... Wxf2 !

31 Wb2 Kf8 32 Kd2 Wc5 33 Kd4 Qg7 34 Wb4 a5 35 Wa3 Kc7 36 Kc4 Kxc4 37 Qxc4 Qg4

Mate is threatened on h2 but the knight also offers up some other interesting possibilities.

38 Wb3 Kc8 39 Qd3



39... Kxc2 !

If the rook is captured then 40... Qf2+ wins the queen (remember the back rank!).

40 Wb4 Qf2+ ! 41 Kxf2 We1+

The rook is pinned to the queen.
42 Qf1 Kxf2 43 Wd4+ Qf7 44 Wd7+ We7 45 Qc4+ Qf8 46 Wd1 We4 47 Wd8+ Qg7 0-1

Game 2

C.Dolezal White
A.Hoffman Black
Buenos Aires 1998

1 e4 c5 2 Qf3 g6 3 d4 Qg7 4 Qc3 cxd4 5 Qxd4 Qc6 6 Qe3 d6 7 Qe2 Qf6

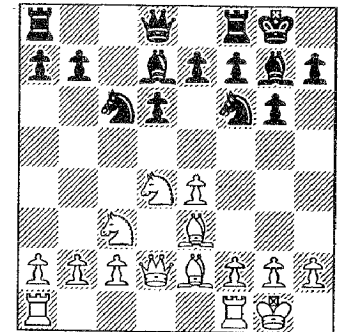
Having begun as a Hyper-Accelerated Dragon, we've now returned to the realms of a normal Classical Dragon.

8 0-0 0-0 9 Wd2

Certainly a non-committal move, the text is not, however, a popular system these days. This chapter's introduction highlighted its downside, but, although it doesn't actually prevent 9... d5 , clearly the preparation of Kad1 is some sort of

deterrent. White plans to keep a grip in the centre, but even without the logical 9... Qg4 ! it seems that Black has other ways to handle the position.

9... Qd7



For someone playing for a win (i.e. a Dragon player!), compared to the other sensible alternatives, this move has the advantage of keeping more pieces on the board.

10 Kad1

The best attempt at frustration. The most aggressive continuation is 10 f4 but Black can immediately put pressure on his opponent with 10... Qxd4 ! 11 Qxd4 Qc6 12 Qf3 e5 ! (a timely intervention of the e-pawn ultimately leaving White with an isolani on e4). Now 13 fxe5 dxe5 14 Qe3 Wxd2 15 Qxd2 Kfd8 16 Kad1 Kd4 17 Qg5 h6 18 Qxf6 Qxf6 19 Qd5 Qg5 20 Kxd4 exd4 21 Kd1 Kc8 22 Kxd4 Qxd5 23 Kxd5 Kxc2 24 Kd7 Kxb2 left Black with a winning opposite-coloured bishop scenario in M.Illescas Cordoba - B.Gulko, Leon 1992.

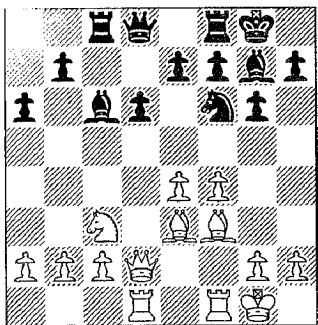
The more cautious (but as far as I can see doing very little) 10 h3 also enables Black to go on the offensive with 10... Qxd4 ! 11 Qxd4 Qc6 12 Qd3 e5 ! (usually a good continuation when it can be followed by Black's next move) 13 Qe3 d5 . In

the following encounter Black soon took command of more than just the centre: 14 exd5 ♖xd5 15 ♕g5 ♖a5 16 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 17 f3 e4 18 fxe4 ♗d4 19 ♖h1 ♗xb2 20 ♕h6 ♖ae8 21 ♕xg7 ♗xg7 22 ♖a5 ♗d4 23 ♖ad1 ♖e5 24 ♗c7 ♖c5 25 ♖f4 ♖e7 0-1 T.Tuomala-Yrjöla, Jyvaskyla 1998.

10...♖c8 11 f4 a6 12 ♗xc6

The typical 12 ♖h1 looks too slow and certainly 12...b5 (simply threatening to win the e-pawn with ...b4) 13 ♕f3 ♗c7 14 ♖b3 b4 15 ♗d5 ♗xd5 16 exd5 ♖a5, aiming for e4, looks good for Black. Indeed, after 17 ♕d4 ♖c4 18 ♗xb4 ♕xd1 19 ♗xd4 ♖e3, White dropped the exchange in E.Geller-G.Serper, Moscow 1995.

12...♕xc6 13 ♕f3



13...♗c7

Though I may frequently rattle on about ...♗xc3 (taking a knight) not being as likely as the traditional exchange sacrifice ...♖xc3, this move still has its uses. Black rules out the White break e4-e5 and adds latent pressure to c2. Note that 13...♗a5? fails to the trick 14 ♗d5 ♗xd2 15 ♗xc7! etc. However, her majesty would be useful on a5 and could easily consider relocating after, say, a preparatory ...♖fd8 or ...♖fe8.

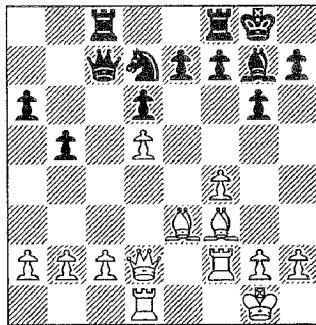
14 ♖f2

Protecting the c2-pawn and preparing ♖c3-d5.

14...b5 15 ♖d5

Seeing no other way to improve his position, White jumps straight in with this move.

15...♕xd5 16 exd5 ♖d7



And now we have an interesting imbalance. White has the two bishops although his light-squared one is impeded by its own pawn. Nevertheless this d5-pawn is the man that fixes Black's e7-pawn as a weakness which White would like to attack. On the other side of the coin, the Dragon bishop is, as always, excellent and the knight has some interesting possibilities too. The c4-square stands out as a potential home while the other black pieces can maintain their pressure on White's queenside.

17 e3

The only satisfactory way to try and blunt the b2-g7 diagonal and deal with problems on the c-file. But, of course, that's certainly not the end of the story as Black always has a simple minority attack to be getting on with.

17...♖b6 18 ♕e2 ♖c4 19 ♕xc4 ♗xc4 20 a3 f5

An intriguing continuation that puts paid to White's ambitions along the f-file but creates a hole on

e6 (something that shouldn't be taken lightly). The immediate 20...a5!?, intending ...b4, was of course a serious alternative.

21 ♕b6!?

Temporarily halting the aforementioned plan while vacating the e-file in readiness for a major piece assault.

21...♖fe8 22 ♗e3

In view of Black's response, probably not best. The arguably more precise 22 ♖e2 would have left matters unclear.

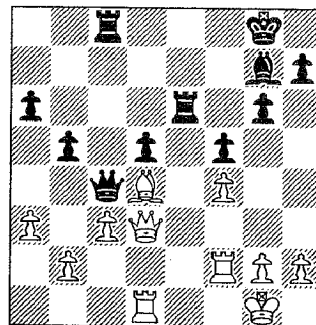
22...e5! 23 dxe6

23 fxe5?! ♖xe5 24 ♗d2 ♖ce8 would have seen Black suddenly dominating the e-file and indeed the position. The presence of the d5-pawn would make it very hard for White to attack Black's only weakness: the d6-pawn.

23...♖xe6 24 ♗d3 d5

Placing the final pawn on the opposite colour of the black bishop is a nice touch. Note that this pawn is out of bounds to the white queen because of the decisive tactic 25...♖e1+!

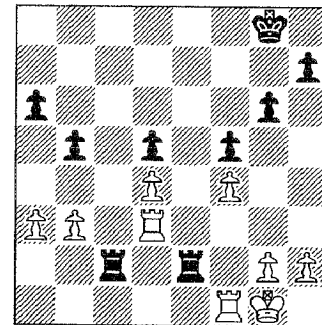
25 ♕d4?!



Trying to shore up the position in order to trade and ultimately pressurise Black's isolated d-pawn. Oh,

forget all that, White was begging for the draw(!), but unfortunately his choice allows a nice forced sequence. Instead 25 ♗xc4 dxc4 26 ♕d4 ♖d8 would leave Black with an endgame edge.

25...♖e1+! 26 ♖f1 ♕xd4+ 27 cxd4 ♗xd3 28 ♖xd3 ♖e2 29 b3 ♖cc2



Yes, now it's seventh heaven for the black rooks.

30 ♖g3 ♖ed2 31 h4 ♖xd4

Black wins a pawn and, with a little care, the game.

32 h5 ♖g7 33 hxg6 hxg6 34 ♖ff3 a5 35 ♖g5 ♖f7 36 ♖h2 ♖e4 37 ♖h3 d4 38 g4 ♖f6 39 gxf5 gxf5 40 ♖g8 ♖ec2 41 ♖g1 ♖c3 42 ♖xc3 dxc3 43 b4 axb4 44 axb4 c2 45 ♖g3 ♖e3+ 46 ♖f2 ♖c3 47 ♖c1 ♖e6 0-1

Game 3

S.Daniliuk *White*

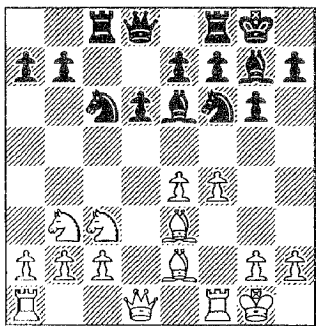
V.Malakhov *Black*

Russian Championship 1995

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 g6 3 d4 ♕g7 4 ♖c3 cxd4 5 ♗xd4 ♖c6 6 ♖b3 ♖f6 7 ♕e2 0-0 8 0-0 d6 9 ♕e3 ♕e6 10 f4 ♖c8

There is nothing wrong with the old continuation of 10...♖a5,

making the c4-square immediately available. However it's always going to be desirable to have a rook on the c-file and the text shows no fear of 11 f5.



11 f5?!

Clearly the most tempting move as White tries to squeeze Black into submission. The less committal alternatives are discussed in the next game.

11...♗d7

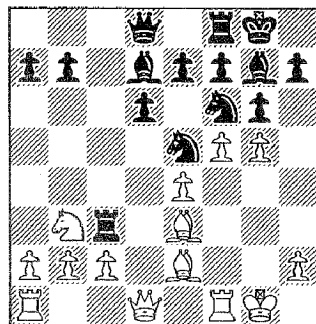
This may look passive but, as you will soon see, it is quite important. 11...♗xb3?! would obviously save a tempo and, yes, it's true that this light-squared bishop is frequently Black's most troublesome piece to activate. However, the b3-knight isn't fantastic and, more importantly, helping to transfer White's a-pawn to the b-file takes the sting out of any ...♞xc3 exchange sacrifices which would otherwise cripple his structure.

12 g4

A naïve White player would now assume that he is steamrolling his way to victory. With 13 g5 in mind, he aims to make the d5-square his own.

12...♗e5 13 ♖d2

Surely I'd given the game away. Please tell me you were anticipating meeting 13 g5 with 13...♞xc3!



Excellent, then it will come as no surprise to you that 14 bxc3 (note that after 14 gxf6 ♞xc3 15 fxg7, the black rook, though behind enemy lines, cannot be trapped) 14...♗xe4 15 fxg6 hxg6 16 ♖e1 ♗xc3, as has been played before, is horrendous for White, whose king is the only one exposed. Sure, rooks are great at moving along straight lines, but with so much open space in the centre it's the minor pieces that are going to rule the day.

In this encounter, White attempts to take measures to thwart Black's invaluable positional sacrifice, but the bottom line is that it's not enough!

13...♞xc3!

You guessed it (I hope!). White has provided more support to e4 but this still doesn't deter Black.

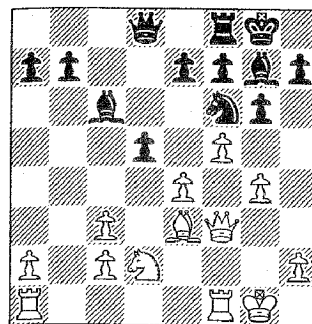
14 bxc3 ♗c6

The e4-pawn remains the immediate target, although Black would happily take the g4 one for free too! The a7-pawn is still sort of *en prise* but even if it could be captured successfully (i.e. without the bishop being trapped by ...b6) it still doesn't figure highly in the main scheme of things.

15 ♗f3 ♗xf3+

Black opts to capture the bishop as he intends opening up the c6-h1 diagonal big-time.

16 ♖xf3 d5!



See what I mean!

17 ♗d4

17 e5 d4! 18 ♖g3 dxe3 19 exf6 ♖d5 (an obvious reason for making the c6-h1 diagonal such a big deal) 20 ♗f3 ♗xf6 leaves the bishops well on top.

17...dxe4 18 ♖h3 ♗xg4!

A handy tactic to remove more of White's flimsy king cover.

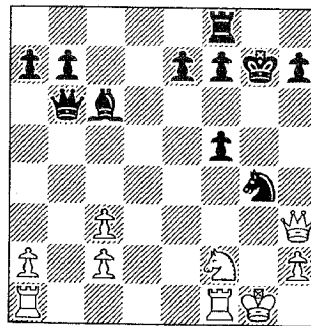
19 ♗xg7

Or 19 ♖xg4 ♗xd4+ 20 cxd4 ♖xd4+ with the decisive 21...e3 to follow (21 ♖f2 not being possible because of the hanging a1-rook).

19...♗xg7 20 ♗xe4

Both knights were hanging.

20...♖b6+ 21 ♗f2 gxf5 0-1



White is completely paralysed and doesn't want to wait to be done over on the g-file. Now what was it I was saying about Black's light-squared bishop?

Game 4

P.Thipsay White

C.Ward Black

British Championship 1998

1 e4 e5 2 ♗f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 g6 6 ♗e2 ♗g7 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♗e3 ♗c6 9 ♗b3 ♗e6 10 f4 ♞c8 11 ♖h1

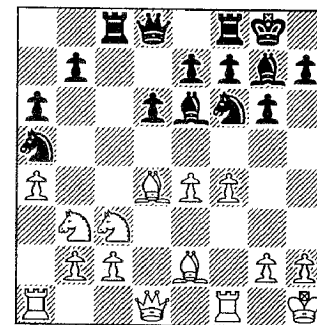
In view of the previous game, not surprisingly, in this vital last round British Championship encounter, the strong Indian IM prefers to play it cool by not conceding the e5-square (with 11 f5?!).

11 ♗f3 supports e4 but relinquishes control of the c4-square. Indeed, after 11...♗c4, wherever the rook moves, both 12...e5!? and 12...b5!? are most satisfactory.

11...a6

A useful move which avoids any later threats of ♗xa7, while preparing a queenside expansion via 12...b5.

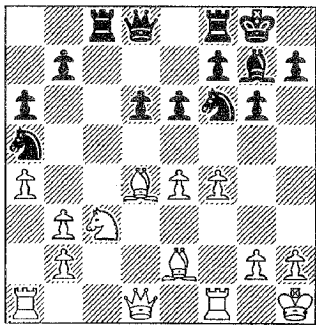
12 a4 ♗a5 13 ♗d4



This is a rather unambitious move. If I (i.e. Black!) had returned with 13...♗c6, then 14 ♗e3 would just repeat the position as 14 ♗g1 can hardly be seen as an improvement. However, White couldn't afford to concede his dark-squared bishop for the knight and so retreating (and repeating!) might even be

objectively best. From my point of view, the winner-takes-all situation, in which the game was played, dictated that I mix things up a bit.

13...♙xb3!? 14 cxb3 e6

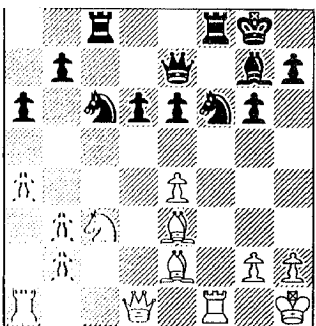


Often it can be simply bad to trade a bishop for knight in this manner, even though it provides Black with a comparatively better pawn majority. However, though desperate to imbalance things, I felt I was justified because the b5-square hadn't been weakened (i.e. as when a2-a4 is provoked by ...a7-a5).

15 f5

Necessary to dissuade the break ...d5 which is on the cards and could easily leave Black emerging with a free pawn in the centre.

15...♘c6 16 fxe6 fxe6 17 ♙e3 ♖e7



The position is fairly murky. White has the two bishops, but Black's preferable pawn structure gives him control of many squares.

18 ♖d2 ♘e5 19 ♗ad1 ♘e8 20 ♙g5 ♗xf1+ 21 ♗xf1 ♙f6 22 ♙f4 ♘f7

A useful square for the knight to drop back to, particularly as it is Black's aim to trade dark-squared bishops (eliminating the bishop-pair and hoping for a good knight vs bad bishop scenario).

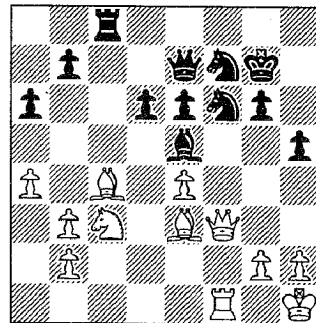
23 ♙c4 ♙e5 24 ♙e3

I had at least been careful to check that 24 ♙xe5 ♘xe5 25 ♘d5 exd5 26 ♖xd5+ ♙g7 27 ♖g8+ ♙h6 didn't work for White.

24...♘f6

It was no surprise to me to see White trying to preserve the advantage of the two bishops, but, having finally obtained the piece configuration I had been aiming for, I knew that I would now have to think of a way to make further progress.

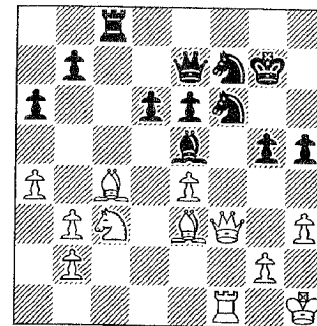
25 ♖e2 ♙g7 26 ♖f3 h5



And this was it! For reasons that I can't really explain when looking at the game again, both players were getting rather short of time. Hence I felt that a kingside attack was worth a gamble. Even if such a policy was unsound, I was hoping that the

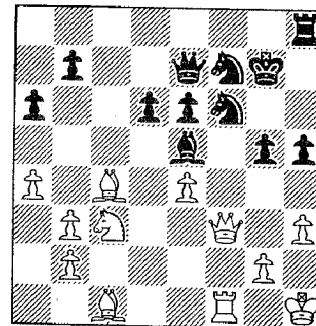
randomness of a time scramble would make it difficult for my opponent to find any flaws. Although I soon concede my other bishop as well, I certainly didn't fancy the immediate exchange 26...♙xc3?! 27 bxc3 ♘e5 28 ♖h3 which would have exposed the dark squares around my king.

27 h3 g5



I would undoubtedly have played this in a friendly five minute game, so why not now?

28 ♙c1 ♗h8



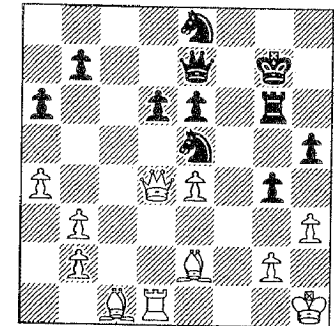
Of course this rook was already well placed, but I felt it was a case of all hands to the pump if I was going to get checkmate!

29 ♘e2 ♗h6 30 ♖e3 ♗g6 31 ♘d4

I recall being worried about this manoeuvre and, specifically, that I would have to part with my beloved

bishop to prevent ♙xe6 and ♘f5+ tricks.

31...♙xd4 32 ♖xd4 ♘e5 33 ♗d1 ♘e8 34 ♙e2 g4



Now there was no holding back. White's two bishops held tremendous potential and I had to somehow get to the white king. The position is a complete mess and, although it was never likely to be his choice in time trouble here, it transpires that the best move for White now is probably 35 hxg4.

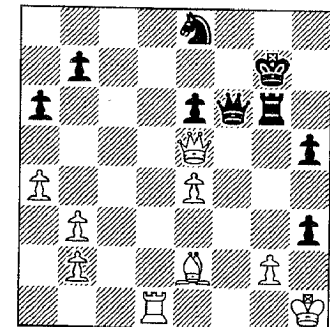
35 ♙f4

Tempting though this seemed, already White was showing signs of falling for a devious trap.

35...gxf3 36 ♙xe5+

Again not visually attractive, but 36 gxf3 ♖h4 37 ♙xe5+ dxe5 38 ♖xe5+ ♘f6 would have been very promising for Black.

36...dxe5 37 ♖xe5+ ♖f6



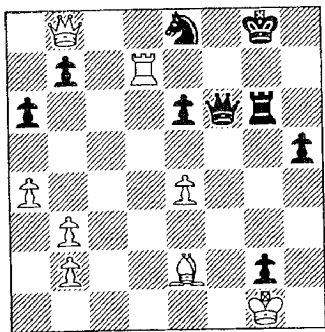
38 ♖d7+

38 ♖xf6+ ♘xf6 39 gxf3 was White's best continuation, but, with several weak pawns in his camp, Black has better practical chances.

38...♗g8 39 ♖b8??

Now the trade of queens would have enabled an 39...hxg2+ intermezzo. Nevertheless, oblivious to the oncoming bolt out of the blue, the text is a categoric disaster!

39...hxg2+ 40 ♖g1



White had assumed that his king was safe and that Black was being tied up in knots at the other end. Regarding the latter, he has a point. Unfortunately on the subject of the former, there is a flaw!

40...♖f2+!!

It's always nice to make a queen sac—even if it's only a temporary one!—and have it displayed on the demonstration board.

41 ♖xf2 g1=♖+ 42 ♖f3 ♖f6+ 0-1

I hope this game has shown the reader a rather offbeat approach to Dragon play (not always recommended!).

Game 5

T.Thorhallsson White

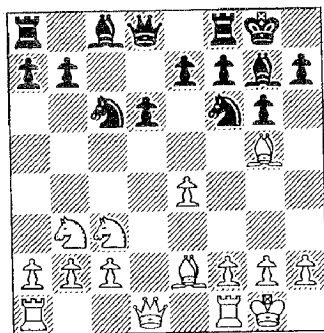
P.Blehm Black

Elbow Beach Club, Bermuda 2001

1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 g6 5 ♖e2 ♖g7 6 ♘b3 ♗f6 7 ♘c3 d6

And from a possible 'Accelerated' Dragon, Black transposes back into a Classical variation.

8 0-0 0-0 9 ♖g5



Occasionally known as the 'Karpov' system, White uses the bishop to exert immediate pressure on f6 and through to e7. The bishop's departure from the centre does, however, leave White weaker along the a7-g1 diagonal.

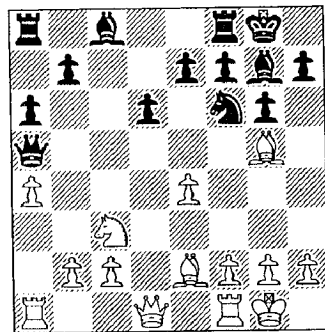
9...a6!? 10 a4

To prevent Black from expanding on the queenside. But this game is an excellent example of why White doesn't usually play this way!

10...♗a5

Angling for the c4-square, but also highlighting how the foundations of the b3-knight have been weakened. For this reason, the immediate 10...♖e6 was also natural.

11 ♗xa5 ♖xa5



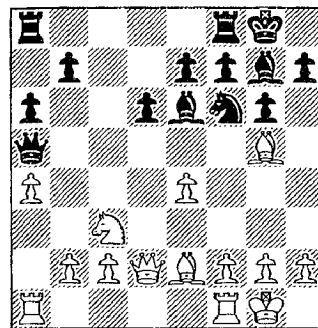
12 ♖d2

Note that, although the game transposes, the earlier 10...♖e6 would have prevented the possibility of 12 ♖xf6 here. However, despite White's simple plan, Black has a couple of ways to cloud the issue:

a) 12...exf6 13 ♖xd6 f5 with the compensating bishop-pair working well to pressurise White's queenside.

b) 12...♖xf6 13 ♘d5 ♖h4!? 14 g3 e6 and White is denied the opportunity to play ♗xf6+, which would not only win the Dragon bishop but shatter the black pawn structure.

12...♖e6



13 ♖h1

13 ♘d5?! doesn't work here as, after 13...♖xd2 14 ♗xe7+ ♖h8 15 ♖xd2 ♖fe8 16 ♘d5 ♖xd5, the e2-bishop hangs.

13...♖fc8

13...♖ac8 also looks sensible but either way White must take steps to reduce the impact of a positional exchange sacrifice on c3.

14 ♖d3 ♖c5!

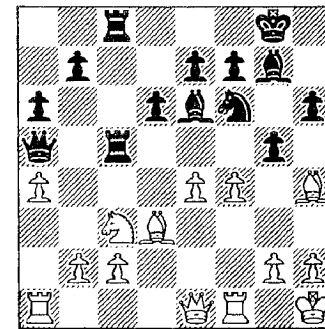
This is also a solid move. Black prepares a doubling of rooks on the c-file, while putting the question to the g5-bishop. Having made a point

of placing it there, White is obviously keen to keep this bishop on its present h4-d8 diagonal, which explains his next move.

15 f4 h6 16 ♖h4 ♖ac8

Black's fourth rank rook clearly hinders White's f4-f5 pawn push but we shall soon see another bonus.

17 ♖e1 g5!?



A bold move, effectively wrestling for control over the e5-square.

18 ♖f2 ♖5c7 19 fxg5

There is no future in 19 f5 ♖c4 as the e5-square becomes Black's anyway and the e4-pawn remains a target.

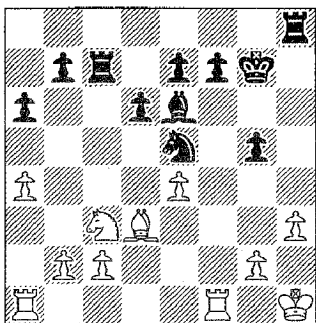
19...hxg5 20 ♖d4

Black now has the superior structure because of White's isolated e4-pawn and a comparatively less useful pawn on h2. However it is obvious that Black has weakened his king position and so he must tread carefully.

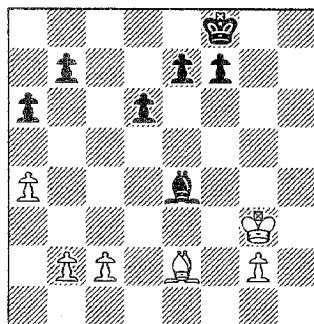
20...♗g4 21 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 22 ♖g3 ♖h8

Black uses the h-file to his advantage and, having a pawn on f7 rather than h7, we can see why it's generally better to have fewer pawn islands.

23 h3 ♖e5! 24 ♖xe5+ ♗xe5



35...Rxc3 36 Rxc3 Rxc3 37 Qf2
Qc6 38 Qxg3 Qxe4

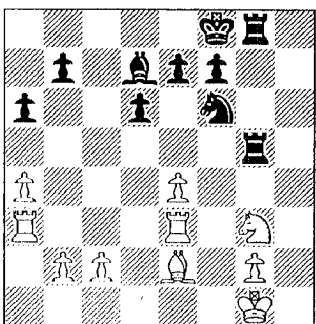


Black's position is certainly very pleasing to the eye.

25 Qg1 g4 26 hxg4 Qxg4 27 Rf3 Rxc5 28 Qe2 Qch5 29 Qg3 Rg5 30 Qc2 Qf8 31 Qf1 Rhg8 32 Raa3 Qf6 33 Rfe3 Qd7

Preparing to transfer the bishop to c6. The half-open g-file is a real burden to White and I also doubt that he wants to have to defend his c-pawn for ever and ever!

34 Qe2



White is extremely tied up and searches for some activity. However, the text loses a pawn and not just to 34...Qxa4, which is also possible.

34...Qxe4! 35 Rxc4

With 35 Qxc4 Rxc2+ 36 Qf1 (36 Qh1 Rg1 37 Qh2 Rg2 is of course even more terminal!) 36...Rg1 37 Qf2 Rg2+ 38 Qf3 Qg4!, Black regains the piece and more.

For all intents and purposes it's game over!

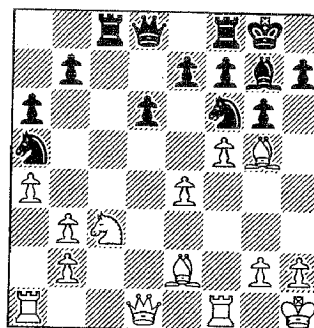
39 c3 e6 40 Qf2 Qe7 41 Qd1 a5 42 g3 d5 43 Qe3 Qd6 44 Qe2 Qc2 45 Qb5 e5 46 Qe8 f6 47 Qb5 Qf5 48 Qe2 Qd7 49 Qd1 Qc5 50 Qd2 d4 51 Qc2 f5 52 Qb3 b6 53 Qc2 Qe6 54 Qd1 e4 55 cxd4+ Qxd4 56 Qc2 Qc4 57 Qd1 e3+ 58 Qe1 f4 59 gxf4 Qe4 60 Qh5 Qxf4 61 Qe8 Qe4 62 Qg6+ Qd4 63 Qc2 Qd3 64 Qb3 Qc5 65 Qf7 Qb4 66 b3 Qc3 67 Qe6 Qc2 68 Qe2 Qxb3 69 Qf5 Qxa4 70 Qxe3 Qc2 0-1

Game 6
R. Zelčić White
I. Balinov Black
Makarska 1997

1 e4 c5 2 Qf3 Qc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Qxd4 Qf6 5 Qc3 d6 6 Qe2 g6 7 0-0 Qg7 8 Qb3 0-0 9 Qg5 a6!?

This is the main alternative to 9...Qe6. Whereas ...a6 and ...b5 is too slow a plan in the Yugoslav Attack, in the quieter lines a queenside pawn expansion is nearly always handy. As regards the former idea, now seems the perfect time to use a high-level blitz game to illustrate some other Classical Dragon points:

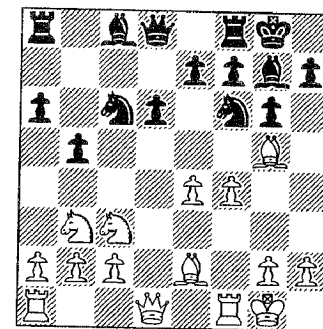
9...Qe6 10 Qh1 (Premature is 10 f4 because of 10...b5!, when the queen check on b6 and pressure on e4 indirectly protects the b-pawn.) 10...Rc8 11 f4 a6 12 a4?! (Weakening the b3-square and making the forthcoming sacrifice that much stronger. This may only be a blitz game but it is nevertheless very instructive as Kramnik's moves flow beautifully.) 12...Qa5 13 f5 Qxb3 14 cxb3



14...Rxc3! (A typical Classical Dragon exchange sacrifice, the likes of which this chapter has already seen. If White accepts it, Black will win at least the c- and e-pawns. Hence he declines it, but this leaves him struggling from now on.) 15 Qxf6 Rxb3 16 Qxg7 Qxg7 17 Qc4 Rb4 18 Qd5 Qb6 (Seeking dark-square domination in the absence of his Dragon bishop.) 19 Qd2 Qd4 20 Qg5 f6 (White is unlikely to be able to make much of the a2-g8 diagonal.) 21 Qg3 Rxb2 22 Ra1 Qc6 23 h4 Qe5 24 Qg4 Rb4 (A perfect situation. The queen stands tall in the centre while the rook continues to Hoover up pawns.) 25 Qh3 Rxa4 26 h5 g5 27 h6+ Qh8 28 Rb1 Rb4 29 Qe3 a5 30 Rbc1 Qd4 31 Qg3 Qe5 32 Qe3 Qd4 33 Qg3 Rb6 (From here on, Black continues to show who's boss with the odd

repetition. In the end he achieves his goal, albeit probably on time!). 34 Rfd1 Qb2 35 Qd3 Qb4 36 Qe3 Qc6 37 Rxc3 a4 38 Rd2 Qb1+ 39 Qh2 Rb2 40 Rxb2 Qxb2 41 Qxc6 bxc6 42 Rxc6 Qe5+ 43 Qh1 d5 44 Rxe6 Qa1+ 45 Qh2 d4 46 Qd2 Qc3 47 Qa2 Qc7+ 0-1 R.Kasimdzhanov -V.Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee 1997.

10 f4 b5



11 Qf3

Protecting the e-pawn and offering up possibilities of e5, hitting both knights. It must be remembered though that ...Qb6+ offers indirect support to the one on c6.

11...b4!

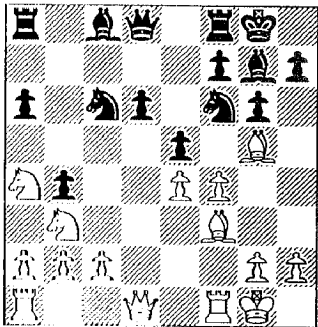
Immediately putting the question to the white knight. However, receiving support from the new World Champion, 11...Qb7!? shouldn't be overlooked. Indeed, it introduces a new dimension to the play, 12 Qh1 Qd7 13 Rb1 (so that the knight can move without dropping the b-pawn) 13...Rxe8 14 Qd5 f6 (!' according to Vladimir Kramnik. The start of a novel idea to kick away the d5-knight and secure the e5-square for one of Black's own steeds.) 15 Qh4 e6 16 Qe3 g5! 17 Qg3 gxf4 18 Qxf4 Qde5 19 Qh5 Rf8. Controlling some vital squares along White's 5th rank, Black stands a

little better and indeed went on to win in M.Apicella-P.Svidler, Yerevan 1996.

12 ♖d5

The most obvious move, but possibly not the best. Placing the knight offside with 12 ♖a4 could be better, when I once had a marathon encounter with 12...♙d7 13 ♖f2 ♖c7 14 a3 ♖ab8 15 axb4 ♖xb4 16 c3 ♖c6 17 ♖d4 ♖a5 18 f5 ♖c4 19 b3 ♖e5 20 c4 h6 21 ♙e3 ♙xa4 22 ♖xa4 g5 23 ♖xa6 g4 24 ♙e2 ♖xe4 25 ♖f4 ♖b7 26 ♖a5 h5 27 ♖b5 ♖a8 28 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 29 ♖b1 ♖f6 30 ♙d4 ♙h6 31 ♖f1 ♖e4 32 ♖b2 f6 33 ♖a1 ♖xa1+ 34 ♖xa1 ♖d2 35 ♖d1 ♖e4 36 ♙b6 ♙e3+ 37 ♙xe3 ♖xe3+ 38 ♖h1 ♖xb3 39 h3 gxh3 40 ♙xh5 hxg2 41 ♖xg2 ♖d2+ 42 ♖xd2 ♖xd2 43 ♖c7 ♖dxc4 0-1 J.Gallagher-C.Ward, London 1988

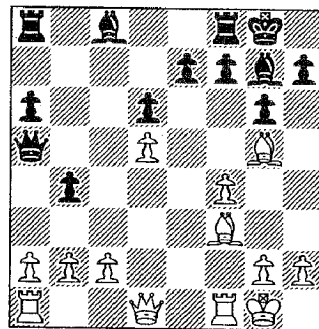
Another sensible alternative is 12...♖c7, e.g. 13 ♖f2 ♙b7 14 c3 a5 15 ♖d2 bxc3 16 bxc3 ♖b8 17 e5 dxc5 18 ♙xb7 ♖xb7 19 ♖bc5 ♖c7 20 ♖b1 ♖a6 21 ♙xf6 ♖xc5 22 ♙xg7 ♖xg7 23 ♖b6 ♖ab8 24 ♖d5 ♖a7 25 fxc5 ♖e4+ 26 ♖d4 ♖xb1 27 ♖xb1 ♖xc3 0-1 P.Gerber-T.Tolnai, Zurich 1988, but check out 12...e5!?



...conceding an outpost on d5 only now that the knight has gone from c3: 13 f5 a5 14 c4 bxc3 15 ♖xc3 a4 16 ♖d2 a3 (or even 16...♖b6+ 17

♖h1 ♖xb2 18 ♖c1 ♖d4 19 ♖c4 ♖b8 20 ♖b1 ♖c7 21 ♖b6 ♖xc3! 22 ♖xa8 ♙a6 when Black's chances are certainly not worse) 17 b3 ♙a6 18 ♙e2 ♖b6+ 19 ♖h1 ♖d4 20 ♖c1 ♖b4 21 ♖c4 ♖xe4 (Things are also crazy with 21...♖xa2!?) 22 ♖xe4 (At first, 22 ♖xd4 exd4 23 ♖xe4 appears good for White, until closer inspection of 23...d5 24 ♙e7 ♖xa2! 25 ♖c2 dxc4 26 ♖xa2 cxb3 27 ♙xa6 bxa2 28 ♙xf8 ♖xa6 29 ♙xg7 ♖xg7. Okay, it's a fantasy variation but one that demonstrates the tactical potential of Black's position. Here it would be the back rank that causes White problems.) 22...d5!? (The straightforward 22...♖xe4 may also be okay.) 23 ♙e7. Now Black eventually went on to win with 23...♖fb8 in R.Tischbierek-R.Meessen, Berlin 1996, but 23...♖xa2! 24 ♙xf8 (or 24 ♖a1 ♖fe8) 24...♖xc1 25 ♙xg7 ♖xe2 26 ♖xe2 ♖xg7 is even stronger.

12...♖d5 13 exd5 ♖a5 14 ♖xa5 ♖xa5



15 ♖h1

As is often the case when White's e-pawn transfers to d5, Black's e7-pawn is his main weakness. However, 15 ♙xe7 ♖e8 is very nice for Black as 16 ♙xd6?? drops the bishop to 16...♖b6+. The

alternative, of course, is a retreat of the white bishop along the e7-h4 diagonal which will probably concede both the b2 and a2-pawns.

15...♖e8 16 ♖c1

This looks a little passive but *WWTd* demonstrated how important the b-pawn is. Indeed, after 16 ♖e1 ♙xb2 17 ♖b1 ♙c3 18 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 19 ♙xe7 ♖xa2 20 g4 ♙b7 21 f5 ♖c4 22 ♙xd6 ♖d8 23 ♙e7, White's position soon fell apart at the seams: 23...♖xd5! 24 ♖f1 ♖xf1+ 25 ♖xf1 ♖d1! 26 ♖g2 ♖xf1 27 ♙xb7 ♖a1 0-1 G.Basanta-T.Tolnai, Saint John 1988.

16...♖b5

Preparing to relocate the queen is logical, although also sensible was 16...♙f5!? 17 a3 ♖ab8 18 axb4 ♖xb4 19 ♖xa6 h6 20 ♙h4 ♙xb2 21 ♖e3 ♖c4 22 ♙e2 ♖xd5 23 c4 ♖e4 24 ♖xe4 ♙xe4. Indeed, ultimately it had helped Black to bag a pawn (and the game) through queenside pressure in G. Del Rio de Angeles-A.Romero Holmes, Leon 1997.

17 ♖b1 ♖c4

The black queen is more active here and, in case it matters, the a-pawn is no longer obstructed.

18 ♖e1 ♙f5 19 b3

Expelling the queen but conceding a hole on c3 and doing little to alleviate the pressure on c2.

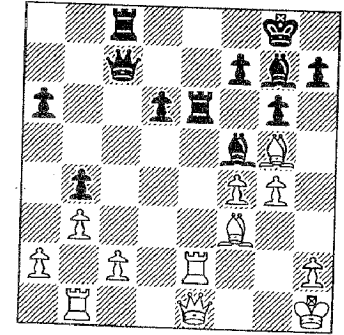
19...♖c7 20 ♖e2 ♖ac8 21 ♖e1 e5 22 dxe6

After 22 ♖xb4 h6 23 ♙h4 exf4 24 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 it will be Black's pawn majority that makes a quicker impact on the position.

22...♖xe6

Black's weak pawn now is on d6, but his active pieces more than compensate for it.

23 g4



Now in fact Black could get away with chopping the c2-pawn, but he has a better refutation of White's rash outburst.

23...♙xg4! 24 ♖f1

Presumably White had failed to notice 24 ♙xg4 ♖b7+ 25 ♖g1 ♙d4+ 26 ♖f1 ♖h1 mate!

24...♖xe2 25 ♖xe2 ♖xc2 26 ♖e1 ♖xe2 27 ♙xe2 ♖e8 0-1

The e2-bishop is pinned and won!

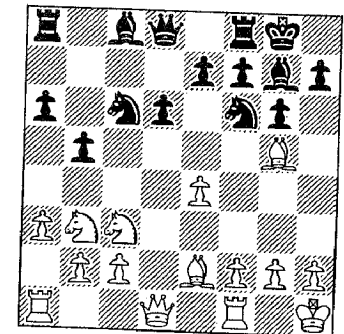
Game 7

F.Fulgang White

C.Ward Black

Politiken Cup, Copenhagen 1996

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 g6 6 ♙e2 ♙g7 7 0-0 ♖c6 8 ♖b3 0-0 9 ♙g5 a6 10 ♖h1 b5 11 a3



Halting ...b4 in this way is a necessary consequence of White's previous move as there is no alternative convenient way to defend the e-pawn. The obvious drawback of this move is the reduced support now provided for the b3-knight.

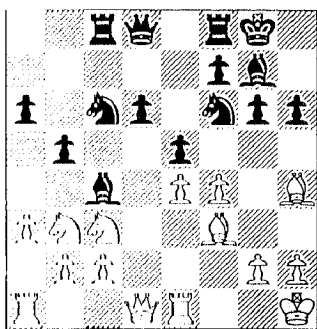
11...♙e6 12 f4 ♜c8 13 ♚f3 ♙e4

With a simple and reasonably effective plan in mind. That said, 13...♘d7 was also sensible, unleashing the bishop and preparing a relocation of the knight to the queenside.

14 ♜e1 h6

There isn't exactly a rule of thumb regarding this move but obviously it has its pros and cons. Provided it doesn't seriously weaken the king and the g6-pawn isn't put too much at risk, then it is often worthwhile. Here, for example, the bishop is forced to leave the f-pawn unguarded (adding more bite to Black's next move) and ...g5 becomes a serious option.

15 ♙h4 e5



Black is looking to gain the e5 square for the knight. With this in mind, White's following thematic response is necessary and the key battle revolves around the centre.

16 f5 ♙xb3!?

Certainly not forced (and hardly worth a thought if the white a-pawn

was still on a2) but the idea was to mix things up a bit and play for a win,

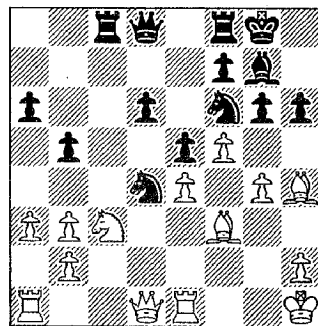
17 cxb3 ♘d4

Black has conceded the bishop-pair and is apparently left with an unusually poor Dragon bishop. However, now standing tall in the centre is a fantastic black knight which can only be removed at the cost of re-opening the blocked b2-g7 diagonal.

18 g4?

A continuation which is tactically flawed but, to the good fortune of the reader(!?), I failed to exploit this.

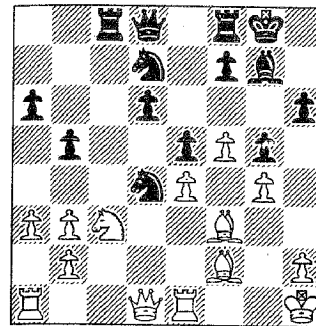
After 18 ♙f2 Black gets in the move he is aiming for, i.e. 18...d5! 19 fxg6 (or 19 exd5 ♘xf5 20 ♜xe5 ♘g4! 21 ♜e2 ♘xf2+ 22 ♜xf2 ♜h4 with very active play) 19...♘xf3 20 ♜xf3 d4 21 gxf7+ ♜xf7, leaving Black holding all of the cards thanks to his better placed rooks.



18...g5

Sure, I could have closed the book on this encounter with 18...♘g4! 19 ♙xg4 (19 ♙xd8 ♘f2+ 20 ♙g2 ♘xd1 21 ♙e7 ♘xb2! 22 ♙xf8 ♜xc3 23 ♙xg7 ♙xg7 also leaves Black accumulating a fair amount of pawns for the exchange) 19...♜xh4 20 f6 (20 fxg6 fxg6! 21 ♙xc8 ♜f2 will be mate) 20...♙xf6 21 ♙xc8

♜xc8 22 ♜g1 ♙g5. Well, okay, it's not the end of the game but it's absolutely clear who is in the driving seat. Anyway my point is that had I have selected that continuation the reader would not have benefited from the positional niceties still to come. It's alright, don't mention it! 19 ♙f2 ♘d7

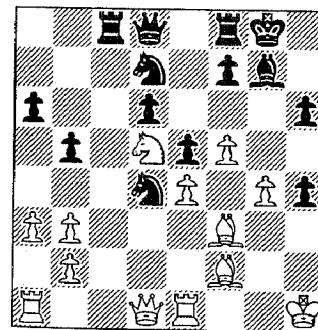


Preparing both ...♘c5 and ...♙f6. As regards the latter, which may also involve a manoeuvring of this bishop to an open diagonal on the queenside (e.g. b6-g1), White now tries to get in his only break while he has the chance.

20 h4 gxh4

Unfortunately it doesn't really work out for White who, in reality, only seems to have gifted Black the g5-square.

21 ♘d5



Note that the fork on c2 can always be met by ♜c1—with a

counter fork soon appearing on e7. Black's response eliminates this while preparing to bring a rook to the g-file.

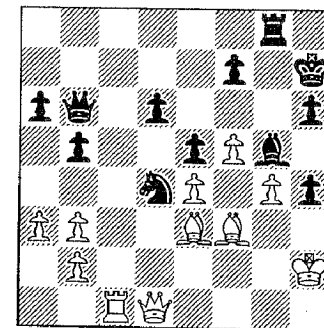
21...♙h7 22 ♜g1 ♙f6 23 ♜g2 ♜g8 24 ♜h2 ♜c2

This infiltration was inevitable. Black has everything under control on both sides of the board.

25 ♙e3 ♜xh2+ 26 ♙xh2 ♘b6

Removing White's only troublesome piece.

27 ♘xb6 ♜xb6 28 ♜c1 ♙g5



Forcing White to part with the better half of his bishop-pair. He opts for an opposite-coloured bishop scenario but the presence of a queen and rook apiece reduces his drawing chances to virtually zero.

29 ♙xd4 exd4 30 ♜c2 ♙f4+ 31 ♙h3 d3!

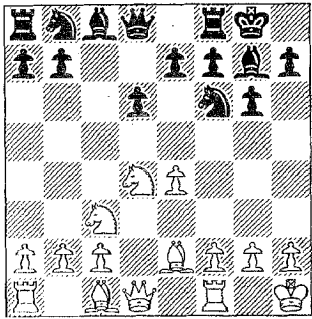
Offering a pawn to make way for the crushing ...♜g1.

32 ♜g2 ♜e3 33 ♙xh4 ♜c8 34 ♜g1 ♜f2+ 0-1

Checkmate follows.

Game 8
P.Rossiter White
C.Ward Black
4NCL, England 1997

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♙e2 ♙g7 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♙h1

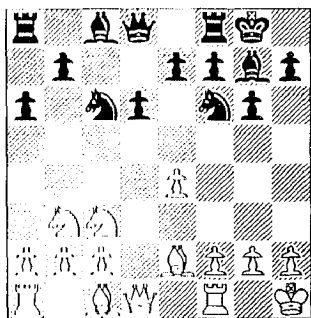


A fairly common move in the Classical Dragon. Note how White plays this rather than 8 ♖b3 because Black is yet to commit his knight to c6. Given that White has the system he wants to play already in his mind, he prefers not to allow Black to confuse matters by playing ...a6 and ...b5 and perhaps develop the knight on d7 instead. Essentially, White may not be intending to play an early ♕c3 but he rightly sees no reason to budge his d4-knight until it is under attack.

8... ♜c6

Now, of course, there are tactics on d4 and c4, e.g. ... ♜xe4 and so White drops the knight back.

9 ♜b3 a6



Building on previous remarks, I would go as far as to say that the

typically Sicilian ...a6 and ...b5 is acceptable in the majority of Classical Dragon variations.

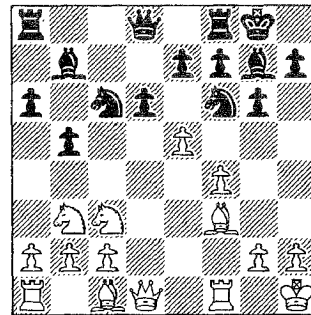
10 f4

10 ♕g5 would transpose to the previous game.

10...b5 11 ♕f3

Protecting the e4-pawn and threatening 12 e5.

11... ♕b7 12 e5



Played anyway and leading to a very sharp position. See the next comments for 12 ♕c3.

12... ♖e8

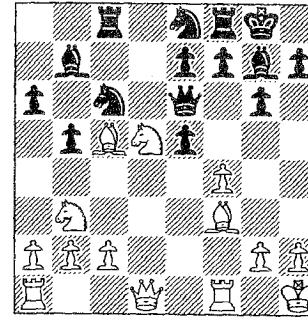
Actually 12...dxe5! 13 ♖c5 ♜b6 14 ♖xb7 ♜xb7 15 fxe5 ♖d7 is more accurate. Certainly White has the bishop-pair and the odd pin but, bearing in mind the e-pawn is going to drop, it is doubtful that this is enough compensation. However the position does transpose with 12 ♕c3 ♜c8 13 e5, making the text encounter theoretically very relevant. The point behind ... ♖e8, in general, is that if exd6 ♖xd6 are interjected, with excellent options available to the black knight, White will regret having his pawn on f4.

13 ♕c3 ♜c8 14 ♖d5

The white pieces are entering Black's territory, but there is still

the central pawn situation to be resolved.

14...dxe5 15 ♕b6 ♜d6 16 ♕c5 ♜e6

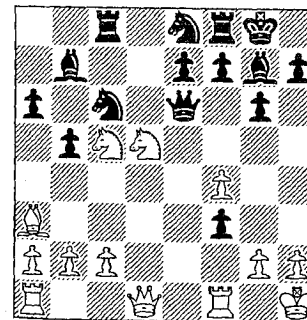


17 ♕a3

A very tempting move when you consider how dangerous 18 ♖c5 might be. Another interesting continuation, though, is 17 ♖a5 ♖xa5 18 ♖xe7+ ♜h8 19 ♖xc8 e4 20 ♕xf8 ♕xf8. White is the double exchange up but must lose a further knight or bishop. There are some wild complications but this particular line certainly seems to favour Black.

17...e4! 18 ♖c5 exf3

A pretty cool queen sacrifice (if I say so myself!), obviously intended with the last move.



Should White now capture the queen, then, in return, Black will eventually get three minor pieces. With his king so exposed, White will be in big trouble.

19 ♜xf3

19 ♖xe6 fxe2+ 20 ♜xg2 fxe6 21 ♖b6 ♜d8 22 ♜e1 b4 23 ♜xe6+ ♜h8 does indeed look very attractive for Black.

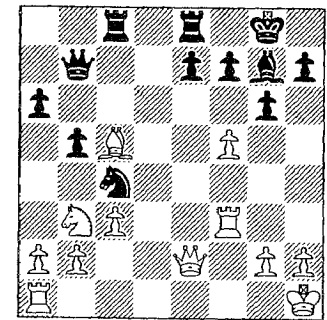
19... ♜d6 20 ♖xb7 ♜b8 21 ♖c5

White's knights look menacing, but his bishop is awkwardly placed. The b2-pawn is an obvious target and the f5-square would be a nice home for a black knight.

21... ♜a7 22 c3 ♖d6 23 ♖b3 ♖c4 24 ♕c5 ♜b7 25 ♜e2 ♜fe8

Black's superior piece coordination gives him the upper hand.

26 ♖e3 ♖6a5 27 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 28 f5



The sort of move White was looking to play in order to get in on some action. However, if all that is achieved is a fxe6 hxe6 scenario, then it will merely serve the purpose of increasing Black's kingside pawn superiority.

28...a5

Threatening 29...a4 to dislodge the white knight and threaten ...a3, further attacking the queenside pawn structure.

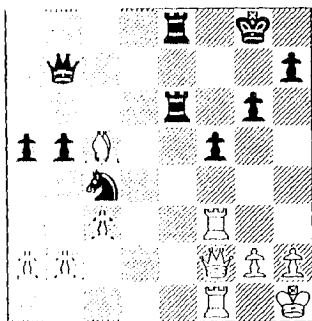
29. ♖d4 e5 30. fxex6 ♜x6 31. ♖f2 ♖f8

In temporarily avoiding the trade, Black deprives the white knight of the d4 square.

32. ♜f1 f5

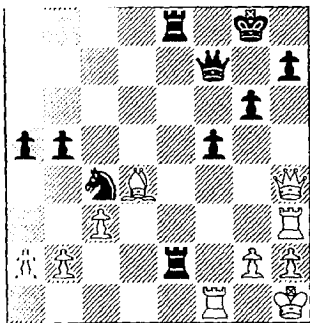
Keep an eye on this pawn for it is destined to become a hero. Already it keeps White's three major pieces at bay.

33. ♖c5 ♖xc5 34. ♖xc5 ♜ce8



It's clear that Black is potentially very weak along the d4-h8 diagonal. Unfortunately (well not for me!) White's bishop cannot exploit this diagonal on its own. It needs the queen there too, but, with the black rook dominating the e-file, this is pretty difficult to arrange. Note, though, that I (unlike most computer programs!) considered 31. ♖xb2 to be a little too greedy!

35. ♖d4 ♜c2 36. ♖h4 ♖e7 37. ♖f6 ♖c6 38. ♜h3 ♖d7 39. ♖d4 ♖f7



Following a spot of fiddling around, the time control has been reached and the moment has arrived to think about making that breakthrough.

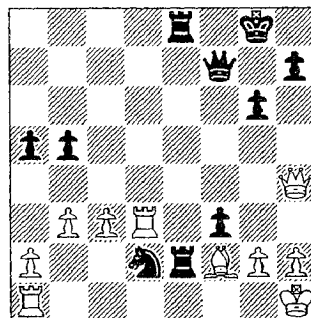
40. b3

Without White's next two moves his queenside pawns would definitely have received some attention (e.g. been taken!).

40... ♖d2 41. ♜a1 f4!

With a plan of opening up the white king like a can of worms!

42. ♜d3 f3 43. ♖f2



43... ♜e1+!

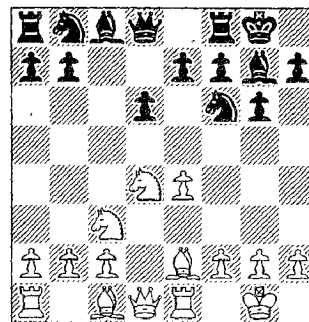
A neat way to terminate the proceedings. Although it looks as though White's defeat should come courtesy of the a8-h1 diagonal, it's ironic that the crushing blow should come on the most heavily guarded square.

44. ♜xe1 ♜xe1+ 45. ♖xe1 fxe2+ 46. ♖xe2 ♖f1+ 47. ♖g3 ♖xd3+ 48. ♖f4 ♖e4+ 0-1

It's mate in three.

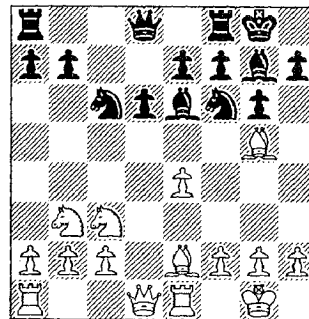
Game 9
I. Balinov White
C. Ward Black
Salona 1997

1. e4 c5 2. ♖f3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♖xd4 ♖f6 5. ♖c3 g6 6. ♖e2 ♖g7 7. 0-0 0-0 8. ♜e1



Initiating an ultra-solid set-up for White. The rook vacates the f1-square (which may now be used for his bishop) and instead moves on to the e-file (which could well be opened in the event of a future exd5).

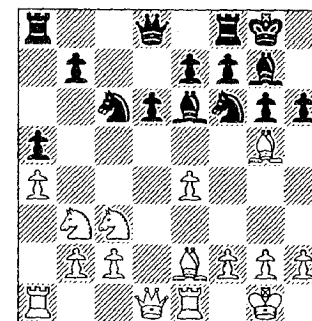
8... ♖c6 9. ♖b3 ♖e6 10. ♖g5



A 'Karpov System' with the rook on e1 and the black bishop committed to e6, I believe this to be a subtle improvement over 10. ♖f1 as this bishop usually has to move again soon anyway, e.g. 10...a5 11. a4 ♖xb3! (Normally it is only wise for Black to trade bishop for knight on b3 if he can make something of his pawn majority elsewhere. Here, as we see, he will be able to get in ...d5.) 12. cxb3 e6! 13. ♖c4 ♖b4 14. ♖g5 h6 15. ♖xf6 (White concedes the bishop to reduce Black's

influence over d5 but he cannot capture on d6 because of the fork on c2.) 15... ♖xf6 16. ♖d2 ♖f8 17. ♜ad1 ♖h7 18. ♜e2 d5 19. exd5 exd5 20. ♖b5 (The pawn is out of bounds, e.g. 20. ♖xd5 ♜xd5 21. ♖xd5 ♜d8, netting the bishop, or 20. ♖xd5 ♖f5!, threatening ...♖xc3.) 20... ♜ac8. Black's surplus centre pawn outweighs White's extra, but ineffective, doubled b-pawn. We have been following a quality encounter in which Black went on to convert this advantage: V. Nevostrujev-Y. Yakovich, Kazan 1995.

10...a5 11. a4 h6

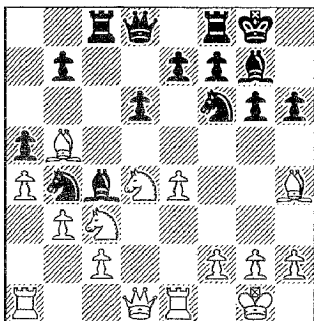


Regarding my earlier comment on move-order accuracy, if Black now takes on b3, White will have saved a tempo by exchanging the comparatively useless ♖f1 (as it will be better off on c4 or b5 anyway) for the clearly handy ♖g5.

12. ♖h4 ♜c8 13. ♖b5 ♖b4

Just as White has taken advantage of his permanent access to the b5-square (the downside of ...a5), Black does likewise with b4. Strictly speaking, of course, it's not an outpost but it is difficult to budge the knight from this square, from where it exerts pressure on c2.

14. ♖d4 ♖c4 15. b3?



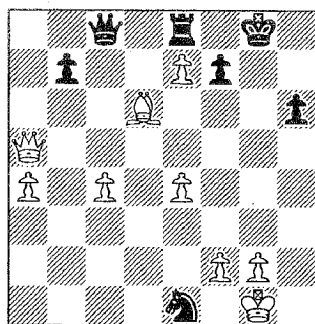
23...♖f6

As you will see, 23...♖xa1 was possibly more accurate.

24 ♖xa5 ♖xa1 25 hxg5!

Muddying the waters and making me regret not having taken the rook earlier.

25...♖c2 26 gxf6 ♖xe1 27 fxe7 ♖e8 28 ♖xd6

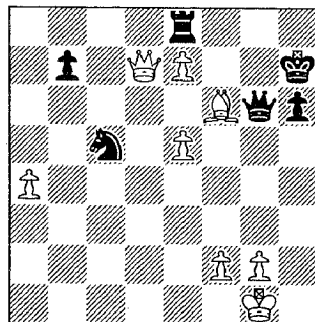


Being a whole rook up, of course, Black is still winning. However White has the odd pawn(!) and in practice things aren't that easy.

28...♖c6 29 ♖e5 ♖xc4 30 ♖g3+ ♖h7 31 ♖e5 f6 32 ♖xf6

The annoying pawn on e7 remains and the black king doesn't have much shelter. There is still a bit of work to be done.

32...♖g8 33 ♖h3 ♖g6 34 e5 ♖d3 35 ♖d7 ♖c5

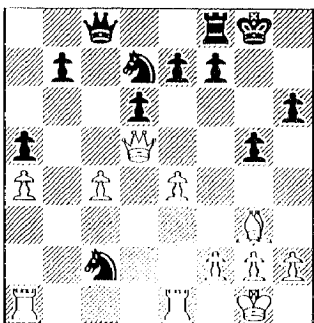


Black has d5 under his control but White doesn't really want to activate the black rook by trading bishops on c4. It's natural enough that White should want to gain control of the vital c4-square, but in doing so he overlooks a simple tactic.

15...♖xb3! 16 cxb3 ♖xc3 17 ♖c4 ♖d7

The rook is trapped behind enemy lines, but a spot of trickery will help to recover it.

18 ♖d2 ♖xc4! 19 bxc4 g5 20 ♖g3 ♖xd4 21 ♖xd4 ♖c2 22 ♖d5 ♖e8



Black need not hurry to take the exchange, but he must be very wary of his king's defences.

23 h4

In the absence of the fianchettoed bishop, it is no surprise that White attempts to expose further Black's somewhat drafty king.

The knight has made a reappearance in order to try and dislodge the enemy bishop.

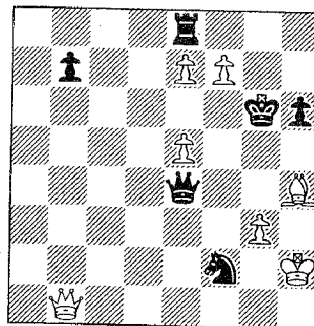
36 ♖c7 ♖e4 37 ♖h4 ♖c6 38 ♖d8 ♖c1+ 39 ♖h2 ♖f4+ 40 ♖g1 ♖c1+ 41 ♖h2 ♖c6

The last few moves were made to reach the time control. Black must now find another way in.

42 f3 ♖g5 43 f4 ♖xa4! 44 ♖g3 ♖e4 45 ♖h4 ♖c5 46 g3 ♖c6 47 f5 ♖e4 48 f6

Things are getting even more interesting. Not your average Dragon position!

48...♖g6 49 ♖d1 ♖f2! 50 ♖b1+ ♖e4 51 f7



After a long game and a bit of hallucinating, here I thought I'd bungled it. Now 51...♖xf7 is met by 52 ♖a2+. Fortunately there is a finesse.

51...♖g4+ 52 ♖h3 ♖xf7!

The knight has been put on a safe square and also the queen is indirectly protected due to the knight fork.

53 ♖f1+ ♖g8 54 ♖f6 ♖xe5 0-1

The roots have gone in White's position and, with the pawn count equal, Black's extra rook will soon be back on the scene. As my very friendly opponent resigned, neither of us could stop ourselves from

chuckling. We both saw the funny side of things. I may have played longer games, but this one seemed like a marathon.

Game 10

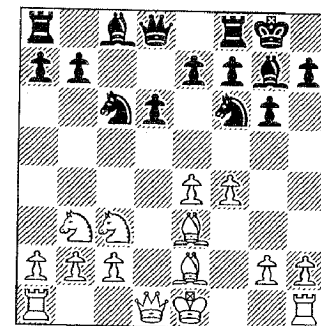
M.Villanueva White

C. Reyes Najera Black

Guatemala City Zonal 2000

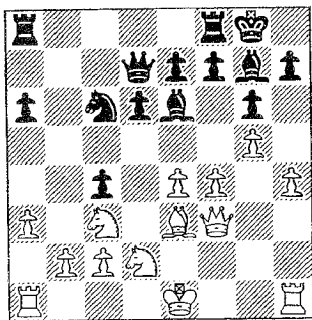
1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 g6 6 ♖e2 ♖g7 7 ♖e3 0-0 8 ♖d2

When White delays or never castles kingside, my opinion is that only 8 f4 ♖c6 9 ♖b3 is really playable, followed by a launch of his kingside pawns.



Supporting my earlier comments in this chapter about ...a6 and ...b5 nearly always being a reasonable plan, since *WSTD* a new panic-free idea has come to light: 9...a6 10 g4 (Of course White might castle kingside now and pretend he was bluffing, but Black could continue merrily with 10...b5. Besides, if White's intended attack doesn't stand the test of a comparatively innocent looking queenside pawn move, then will it ever?) 10...b5 11 g5 ♖d7 12 a3 ♖b6 13 h4 (The pawns look menacing but it seems to me that the real difficulty is

introducing the queen into the attack.) 13...♖c4 14 ♔xc4 bxc4 15 ♖d2 ♕e6 16 ♖f3 ♖d7



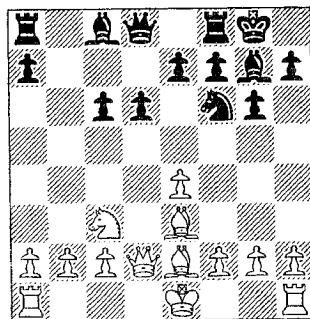
17 ♖b1 (We are following the game D.Belmonte-G.Milos, Clarin Grand Prix, Salta 1995, and it must be said that White's last precautionary move is a sure sign that he is struggling) 17...♖ab8 18 h5 ♔g4 19 ♖f1 ♖e6 20 hxg6 ♔xc3 21 gxh7+ ♖h8 22 bxc3 ♖xb1+ 23 ♖xb1 ♖xe4 24 ♖d2 ♖b8 25 a4 ♖b2 26 ♖a3 ♖a2 27 ♖g1 ♔f5 28 ♖c1 ♖d3+ 0-1 and a very impressive win at that. If this is anything to go by, White's attack is clearly not all that it's cracked up to be.

In case you were wondering, I just don't buy the likes of 8 h4. Black can either castle kingside (or go ...♖c6, i.e. whichever move he hasn't made yet) and then react in the centre with the likes of ...d5 or else block with 8...h5. As f3 is likely to follow soon, the best that White can hope for is a Yugoslav Attack in which he has expended a tempo on the not that useful ♔c2.

8...♖c6 9 ♖xc6?!

This trade is only really advisable if White can follow up with an immediate e4-e5.

9...bxc6



Black has been granted control over the key d5-square as well as a half-open b-file.

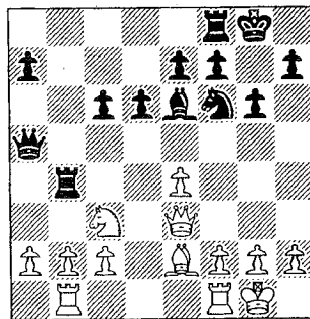
10 ♔h6 ♔xh6 11 ♖xh6 ♖b8 12 ♖b1 ♖a5

A natural move which activates the queen and, incidentally, threatens 13...♖xb2.

13 0-0 ♔e6 14 ♖e3

The white queen returns to the centre, having achieved, frankly, precious little.

14...♖b4



Meanwhile Black's position seems to play itself, with a doubling of rooks on the b-file a natural continuation.

15 a3 ♖b7 16 f4 ♖fb8 17 f5

Black cannot win this pawn because of the check on g5. Thus he is forced to retreat his bishop to a

slightly awkward square. That said, White's aggressive-looking move has the big drawback of conceding the e5-square.

17...♔c8 18 b4

Weakening his position, which, admittedly, is not exactly brimming with options. However, it is true that Black can't take on a3 in view of 19 ♖b3, trapping the queen.

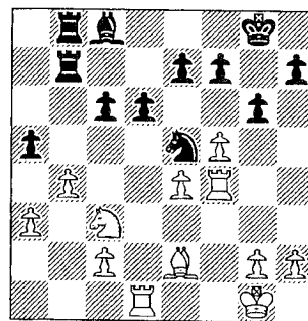
18...♖e5

Taking up a dominant post.

19 ♖f3 ♖g4 20 ♖f4 ♖xf4 21 ♖xf4 ♖e5

First the queen looked good here and now the knight does.

22 ♖d1 a5!

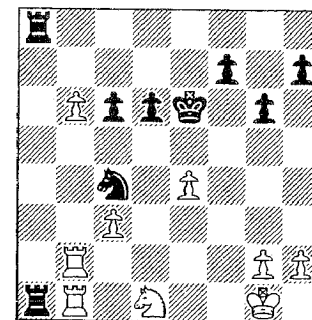


Eliminating a rare black weakness and getting to grips with the white queenside pawn structure.

23 f6 ♖f8 24 ♔a6 ♖a7 25 ♔xc8 axb4 26 axb4 ♖xc8 27 fxg7+ ♖xe7

Now the black king is nicely centralized.

28 ♖b1 ♖a3 29 ♖d1 ♖b8 30 ♖f2 ♖e6 31 c3 ♖ba8 32 b5 ♖a1! 33 ♖fb2 ♖c4 34 b6



34...♖xb1

A simple continuation that does win in the long run. On the other hand, White's trick of 34...♖xb2 35 ♖xa1 ♖xa1 36 b7 doesn't actually work in view of 36...♖xd1+ 37 ♖f2 ♖b1 38 b8=♖ ♖d1+.

35 ♖xb1 ♖b8 36 b7 ♖a5

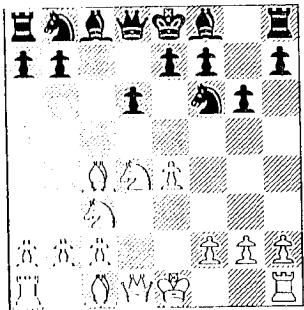
The b7-pawn is in the bag and the rest is just a matter of technique.

37 ♖f2 ♖xb7 38 ♖a1 ♖c4 39 ♖a2 ♖b1 40 ♖e2 ♖b5 41 h3 h5 42 ♖d3 ♖e5+ 43 ♖e3 ♖d7 44 ♖d4 ♖g5 45 ♖e2 ♖g3 46 ♖e3 ♖e5 47 c4 f5 48 exf5+ gxf5 49 c5 f4 50 ♖c4 ♖d3+ 51 ♖e4 d5+ 52 ♖xf4 ♖d4+ 53 ♖g5 ♖xc4 54 ♖xh5 d4 55 g4 d3 56 ♖d2 ♖c2 57 ♖d1 d2 58 g5 ♖c4 59 g6 ♖c1 60 g7 0-1

9

6 ♖c4

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4
 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 g6 6 ♖c4



Since *WWTB*, the above has become rather popular, particularly amongst those White players who, deep down, want to be aggressive but haven't got the bottle for the Yugoslav Attack! Though I've simply called this chapter '6 ♖c4' (as far as I'm aware it doesn't have a name, although I concede that it deserves one!) in fact many of the lines covered here could equally be reached via 6 h3 or, I suppose, even 6 ♗p5 and 6 ♖e3. In an independent setting the former two moves were briefly seen back in chapter 3 (with the latter obviously looked at in the main portion of the book), but here White's intention is to castle kingside and generally try to control things in the centre. In fact often the focus of attention is on the four central squares, with Black typically utilising the c-file and White debating whether simply to

pressurise the f6-knight and the e7-pawn or call his f-pawn into active duty.

Last time around I gave some illustrative examples in which Black fianchettoed his light-squared bishop on b7 after ...a6 and ...b5 and slipped the knight into d7. I still hold a soft spot for that sort of piece formation but I've opted here to travel down a more main line road (though, as usual, in a different style from other textbooks!).

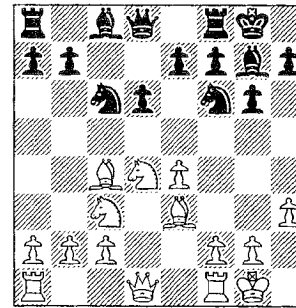
In the lines here, where Black happily settles for developing his knight on c6, what has changed in more recent times is the subtlety of White's move-orders. Specifically, most of the time White would, as a matter of course, simply rest his dark-squared bishop on e3. Situated there, it is safe from tactics which expose his d4-knight. However, as White players became more ambitious (or at least decided they were getting nothing this way!), some perhaps concluded that these tactics were maybe only in their mind. The realisation then was that the bishop might venture further afield to g5. Placed there, it is more aggressive and, what's more, ♖e1 would protect the e-pawn (i.e. without the bishop in the way). Suddenly thoughts appeared that even h3 might be surplus to requirements and...

However, don't worry. As you will hopefully see; life may be

different for White but it's not necessarily any rosier!

Game 1
 G.Garcia White
 J. Van de Mortel Black
 Hoogovens-B, Wijk aan Zee 1996

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4
 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 g6 6 ♖c4 ♖g7 7
 0-0 0-0 8 h3 ♗c6 9 ♖e3



As previously explained, these days White tends to have higher hopes for this bishop than just supporting other pieces in the centre. Moreover, with its partner in crime still on c4, White now feels the brunt of a little tactic.

9...♗xe4!? 10 ♖xf7+

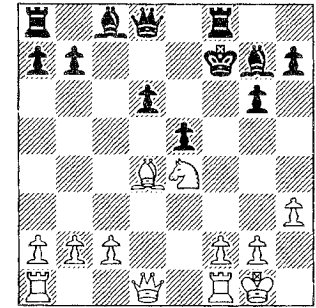
I should say now that although 10 ♗xe4 d5 11 ♗xc6 bxc6 12 ♖d3 dxe4 13 ♖xe4 ♗c7 has previously been assessed by other sources as '±', I'm not sure that that isn't just a shade biased! That said, I do believe that the pressure on White's queenside and potential (preferably not too distant) expansion of Black's f- and e-pawns do compensate him for his a- and c- isolanis.

10...♗xf7!

A fantastic concept dreamt up by the Polish GM Wojtkiewicz, allegedly while languishing in a Latvian prison (satellite TV can be so boring

after the first few years!). As highlighted in *WWTB*, after the ensuing exchanges in the centre, Black wants to have his queen protected. Note 10...♗xf7 is also playable but the text move is stronger.

11 ♗xe4 ♗xd4 12 ♖xd4 e5!



Time for the centre pawns to come into play. Now the point of 10...♗xf7! is revealed. Here 13 ♖c5 isn't possible because the rook on f8 protects the queen.

13 ♖c5 d5 14 ♖g5

Instead 14 ♗g3 ♗g8 15 c3 ♖c6 16 ♗e2 g5 17 ♗d2 h6 18 h4 gxh4 19 ♖xh6 ♗f6 20 ♖g5 ♗g6 21 ♖xh4 ♖f5 22 f4 ♗g4 23 ♖g5 ♖af8 24 ♖f2 d4! 25 cxd4 exf4 26 ♖xf4 ♖c4 27 ♖e3 ♖xf2 28 ♖xf2 ♖xe2 0-1 M.Adams-A.Shirov, Biel 1991, was the featured game in *WWTB*.

14...♗d7 15 ♗c3 h6 16 ♖h4 d4

Though this grants the white knight an attractive home, Black has secured the safety of his centre and now sets about harmonising his army.

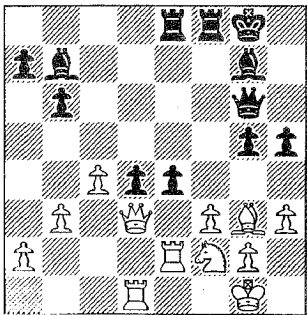
17 ♗e4 ♗g8

17...♗c6 18 ♖e1 ♖f5 19 f3 ♖ac8 also looks favourable for Black but the text needs to be played sooner or later.

18 ♖e1 b6 19 ♗d3 ♖b7 20 c4 ♖ac8 21 ♖g3 ♗c6 22 b3 g5 23 f3 ♖ce8 24 ♖e2 ♗g6 25 ♖d1 h5!

Black unveils his intention to chisel away at the seemingly comfortable-looking white kingside pawn structure.

26 ♖f2 e4!



Keeping the queens on and blasting open the position.

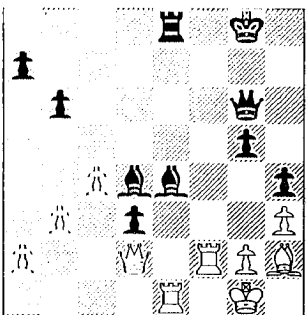
27 fxe4

27 ♖xc4 g4 is too hot for White to handle, after which, unusually, it's the Dragon bishop that is the only piece not yet in on the act.

27...h4 28 ♖h2 ♖xf2! 29 ♖xf2 ♖xe4 30 ♖d2 d3

Advancing the pawn to a more dangerous square and paving the way for the g7-bishop to enter the equation.

31 ♖c1 ♖d4



Now that's what I call a bishop-pair!

32 ♖f1 ♖xf2 33 ♖xf2 g4!

Now the black queen wants a piece of the pie.

34 hxg4 ♖xg4 35 ♖xe4

Desperate, but the likes of 35 ♖g1 h3 36 g3 ♖f3 37 ♖g5+ ♖h7 38 ♖h4+ ♖g6 39 ♖xh3 ♖h1+ 40 ♖f2 ♖f8+ 41 ♖e3 ♖xe1+ were hardly attractive either!

35...♖xe4 36 ♖g5+ ♖f7 37 ♖f4 ♖e1+ 0-1

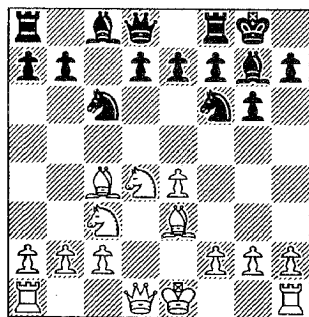
38 ♖f3 ♖e2 is mate.

Game 2
J.Hector White
S.Tiviakov Black
Haninge 1992

1 e4 c5 2 ♖c3

With reference to chapter 3, some White Open Sicilian players select 2 ♖c3 as it can, for example, be slightly annoying for Sicilian Najdorf and Pelikan players. It is, however, of no benefit against Dragon advocates who usually play ...♖c6 anyhow and, in fact, merely offers them the additional option of playing into an Accelerated Dragon line.

2...♖c6 3 ♖f3 g6 4 d4 exd4 5 ♖xd4 ♖g7 6 ♖e3 ♖f6 7 ♖c4 0-0



8 ♖b3

As Black's d-pawn is yet to move, there is even more reason for retreating this bishop and thus guarding against ...♖xe4 forking tricks.

8...d6

Adding to your general knowledge, here Black opts to return to a 'normal' Dragon (thus directly relevant to this book) rather than staying within the realms of the Accelerated variation with, say, 8...a5.

9 h3

Necessary in order to prevent the extremely annoying (and of course strong!) 9...♖g4.

9...♖d7

Black's adopted method of piece development is sound, whatever set-up White chooses, but, for a bit of variety, 9...♖a5!? is covered in the next game.

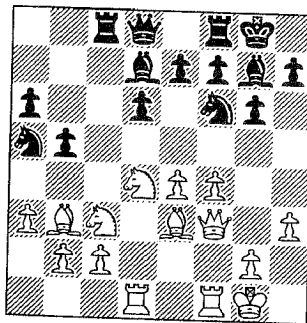
10 0-0 a6 11 f4

11 a4?! prevents 11...b5 but severely weakens the foundations of the b3-bishop while pretty much conceding the b4-square.

11...b5 12 a3 ♖c8

A natural move. Black is intending to infiltrate on the c4-square, though, given half the chance, a tasty exchange sac (winning the e4-pawn) wouldn't go amiss.

13 ♖f3 ♖a5 14 ♖ad1



14...♖c4!

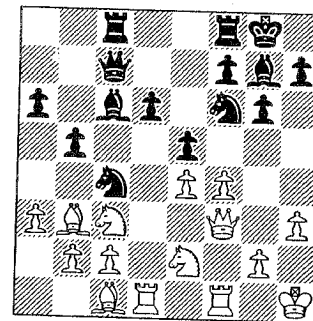
Far more logical than 14...♖xb3?! as doubling White's b-pawns

returns control of the c4-square to White and reduces the impact of any future ...♖xc3. Black would have an 'effective' pawn majority elsewhere but, with possibilities such as g4 and e5, White's pieces would be well placed to contain the black army.

15 ♖c1 ♖c7 16 ♖h1 e5!

The thematic break, ultimately aiming to gain the e5 square for a black piece. Although temporarily blocked in, the Dragon bishop will certainly surface again.

17 ♖de2 ♖c6



Eyeing up the e-pawn and the d5-square. White now attempts to steamroll Black, but his opponent is well-prepared.

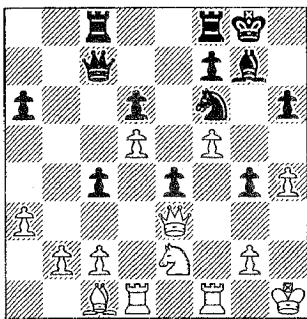
18 f5 h6 19 ♖xc4

When White withdrew his e3-bishop, this trade was obviously a concession he was hoping to avoid. However the knight was proving to be too much of an obstacle.

19...bxc4 20 ♖d5 ♖xd5 21 exd5 e4!

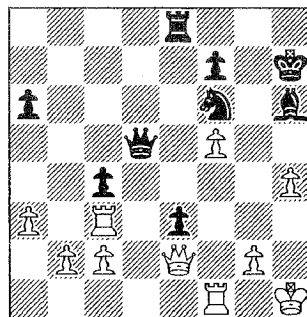
Hassling the white queen, re-opening the long diagonal and vacating a vital square.

22 ♖e3 g5! 23 h4 g4



white queen and leaves White with a horribly passive position. However, I suppose the text is no better as Black retains his passed e-pawn and obtains two perfectly good minor pieces for a rook.

30...♖xh5 31 ♜xg4 ♜f6 32 ♜g3 ♜c5 33 ♜xe3 ♜xd5 34 ♜f3 e4 35 ♜e2 ♖h6 36 ♜g3+ ♜h7 37 ♜c3 e3



White's position is being overrun by the black bits. With ...♖e4 will come a forker's paradise!

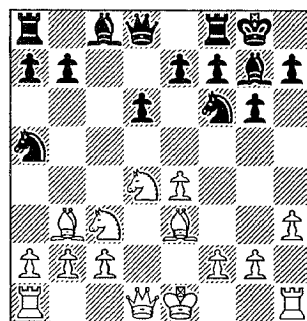
38 ♜xc4 ♖e4 39 ♜f3 ♖d2 40 ♜a4 ♖xf3 41 gxf3 ♜d2 0-1

The e-pawn will promote.

Game 3

J.Polgar White
V.Topalov Black
Novgorod 1996

1 e4 c5 2 ♖c3 g6 3 ♖f3 ♖g7 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♖xd4 ♖c6 6 ♖e3 ♖f6 7 ♖c4 0-0 8 ♖b3 d6 9 h3 ♖a5!?



White, once again, has access to the f4-square. However he has no play down the f-file and there are holes around his king.

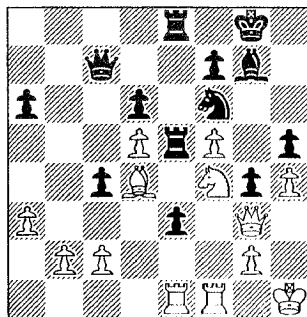
24 ♜g3 ♜fe8 25 ♖e3 h5 26 ♖f4 ♜e5 27 ♖d4 ♜ce8

A nice positional exchange sacrifice, simultaneously avoiding the tempting but flawed 27...♜xf5? 28 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 29 ♖xh5!

28 ♜de1

In retrospect, perhaps, White should take the offered material now, but after 28 ♖xe5 ♜xe5 it's difficult to see how White can improve his position, whereas Black can clearly activate his pieces still further while pressurising and picking off the likes of d5 and f5.

28...e3



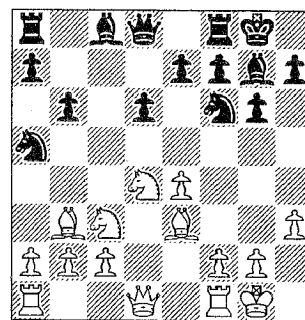
29 ♖xe5 dxe5 30 ♖xh5

With ...♖c4 coming, 30 ♖e2 ♖h6!? severely embarrasses the

Along with 9...♖d7 this is another move that seems to be doing fine for Black. The option of trading the knight for the bishop is now there, while the a8-h1 diagonal is cleared in anticipation of an assault on White's e-pawn.

10 0-0 b6

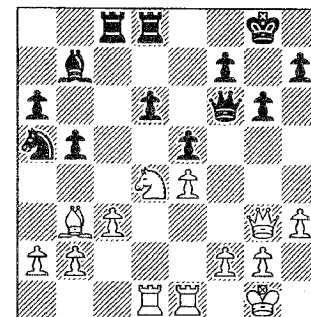
There is, of course, no hurry to swap on b3 and, besides, for the time being it's less frightening to maintain a grip on the c6-square (seeing white knights on c6 and d5 would be a disaster for Black).



11 ♜d3

White will never want to play the awkward-looking f3, as, although it may temporarily (i.e. until Black can prepare a ...d5 blast) blunt the b7-g2 diagonal, weaknesses are created elsewhere (e.g. the g3-square). However, he has to solve the problem of how to defend his e-pawn and it is this factor which led theory to the conclusion that the bishop may be misplaced on e3. To illustrate an alternative mode of play: 11 ♜e1 ♖b7 12 ♖g5 (so the bishop has to move again) 12...a6 13 ♖d5 e6 (A standard response. Black would rather have to deal with a weak d6-pawn than endure the suffering along the e-file that would come with capturing on d5.) 14 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 15 ♖xf6+ ♜xf6 16 c3 ♜ac8

17 ♜d3 ♜fd8 18 ♜g3 b5 19 ♜ad1 e5!

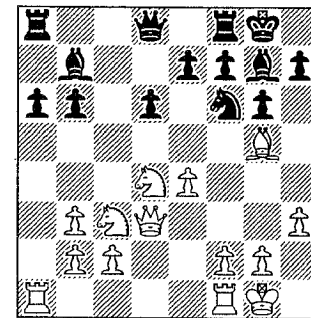


20 ♖f3 ♖xb3 21 axb3 ♜e6 (The d5-square is officially an outpost, but Black is odds-on favourite to eliminate that shortly.) 22 b4 f6 23 ♖h2 d5! 24 exd5 ♜xd5 25 ♜xd5 ♜xd5. Black has a bishop for a knight on an open board and his kingside pawn majority looks more menacing than White's queenside equivalent. The eventual outcome was 0-1 in K.Nieminen-E.Sutovsky, Isle of Man 1999.

11...♖b7 12 ♖g5

One appeal of this set-up for Black is that it is not so easy for White to routinely plonk a knight on the usual spot, e.g. 12 ♖d5?! ♖xb3 13 ♖xf6+ (else Black simply wins a pawn by taking on d5 himself) 13...♖xf6 14 axb3 d5! and the resulting open position will be tailor-made for the black bishop-pair.

12...♖xb3 13 axb3 a6

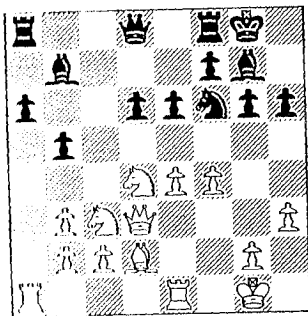


White's queenside structure feels more comfortable with the old a2-pawn now on b3. However, with d5 well-covered, he has no obvious plan and, although the position is probably about equal, there is more room for dynamism on Black's part.

14 ♖f1 h6 15 ♖d2

Possibly 15 ♖h4 was rejected because of 15...♗h5!?. Admittedly, White may then have trouble retaining his bishop and dealing with the likes of ...♗f4. One unusual tactic comes after 16 f3 ♖xd4+!? 17 ♗xd4! e5. Okay, it doesn't actually win a piece, as 18 ♖xd8? exd4 is hardly forced, but, for example, 18 ♗f2 g5 19 ♖g3 f5 applies some very reasonable pressure to White's kingside.

15...b5 16 f4 e6

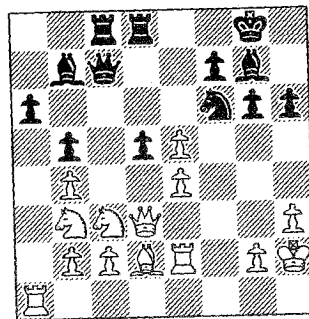


In the typical 'hedgehog' structure, the notorious weakness for Black is his d-pawn. With so many pieces on the d-file, though, White is unlikely to make pressure there count.

17 ♗h2 ♖e8 18 ♖e2 ♗c7 19 b4 ♖f8 20 ♗b3 e5!

A timely strike.

21 ♖e5 d5!



The intended follow-up. With files and diagonals being opened up left, right and centre, White's king and queen are right to feel nervous.

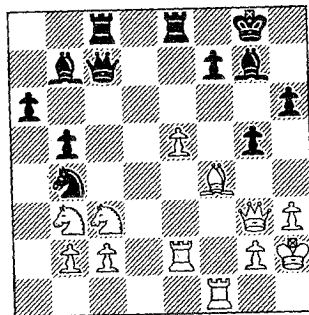
22 exd5 ♗xd5 23 ♗g3 ♗xb4

The board is open and just ripe for Black's bishop-pair.

24 ♖f1 ♖e8!

Attacking a big White weak point while correctly avoiding the complications of 24...♗xc2 25 ♖c1.

25 ♖f4 g5!



Provocative but accurate. White is now forced to sacrifice (if that makes sense!?) a piece.

26 ♗d4 gxf4 27 ♖xf4 ♖xe5 28 ♖xe5 ♗xe5 29 ♗f5 ♖c4!

Without White's rook on the board there is no way to drum up anything like sufficient play.

30 ♗xh6+ ♗h7 31 ♖xc4 ♗xg3+ 32 ♗xg3 bxc4 33 ♗xf7 ♖g6 34 ♗d8

As if White's material deficit isn't already enough cause for concern, this knight is running out of places to hide!

34...♖c8 35 ♗a4 ♖e5+ 0-1

36...♖c7, trapping the knight, would otherwise follow.

Now on to a tussle of tremendous theoretical interest. There are many meaty variations in the annotations to this game and some assessments have drastically changed in recent times.

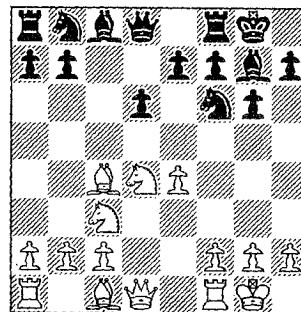
Game 4

L.McShane White

S.Hansen Black

Politiken Cup, Copenhagen 1999

1 e4 e5 2 ♗f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 g6 6 ♖c4 ♖g7 7 0-0 0-0

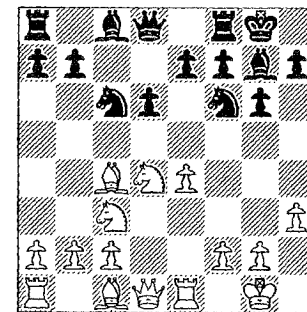


8 ♖e1

Hopefully, by the end of this chapter you will understand the pros and cons of White's different move-orders and how you may want to react to the different permutations of h3, ♖b3, ♖e1, ♖g5 or ♖e3. That

aside, general principles still apply. For example, one practical encounter saw: 8 h3 (i.e. instead of the text 8 ♖e1) 8...♗c6 9 ♗xc6?! (as we know only too well, giving Black a handy half-open b-file and control of the d5-square) 9...bxc6 10 f4 ♗xe4!? (certainly not forced but a familiar tactic that pans out just fine) 11 ♗xe4 d5 12 ♖d3 dxe4 13 ♖xe4 ♖a6 14 ♖e1 ♖d4+ 15 ♖e3 (else the white rook runs short of squares) 15...♖xe3+ 16 ♖xe3 ♗b6 17 ♗f3 ♗xb2 18 ♖d1 ♖ad8 when Black emerged from the opening with an extra pawn and eventually won in R.Bates-K.Mah, Witley 1999.

8...♗c6 9 h3

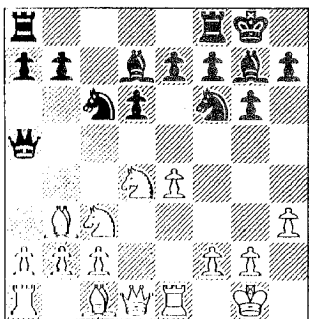


In this more modern approach, White decides that there are no immediate tactics in the centre and hence doesn't commit the bishop to e3. Note h3 is always a useful move as it cuts out ...♖g4 as well as ...♗g4. Alas, here, this key pawn doesn't last long. Read on!

9...♖d7 10 ♖g5

Alternatively, 10 ♖b3 is the safe option. Then one popular way for Black to play is 10...♗xd4 11 ♗xd4 ♖c6 (threatening 12...♗d5). When the white queen moves, Black can

try ...♘d7, aiming for c5 and a possible plan of ...a5-a4. However the Danish Dragon connection seems to favour 10...♖a5:

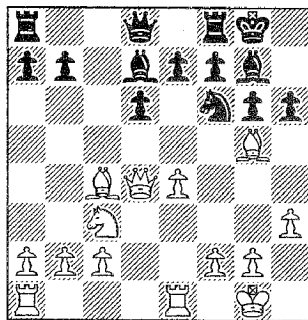


Alas, (well not from our point of view!) in an encounter against Sune Berg Hansen's good friend (and sparring partner), IM Nicolai Borge, the English wonder kid was also the victim a year earlier: 11 ♖e3 ♜fe8 12 f4 ♘xd4 13 ♖xd4 ♖c6 14 ♗d3 ♜ad8 15 ♗e3 b6 16 e5 dxe5 17 fxe5 ♘d5 18 ♗f2 ♜f8 19 ♘e4 h6 20 ♜ad1 ♗a6 21 e3 ♖a4 22 ♜d2 ♖xb3 23 axb3 ♗b7 24 ♗f3 ♗c8 25 ♜f2 ♘e7 26 ♖c3 ♘c6 27 ♖c1 ♗c7 28 ♗f3 ♜d5 29 ♜ef1 ♗xe5 (The problem! The isolated white e-pawn can be a strength, but it also has a tendency to just drop off!). 30 ♗f3 f5 31 ♘g3 ♗d6 32 ♗e2 ♘c5 33 b4 ♘d3 34 ♜f3 ♘xc1 35 ♜xc1 e5 36 ♘f1 e4 37 ♜f2 ♜d3 38 ♗c2 ♖h7 39 ♜d2 ♜d8 40 ♜cd1 h5 41 ♗a4 ♗e7 42 ♜xd3 ♜xd3 43 ♜e1 ♗b7 44 ♗b5 a6 45 ♗c4 b5 46 ♗e6 ♗a7+ 47 ♘h2 ♗f2 48 ♜a1 f4 49 ♗e7 f3 50 ♗g5 ♜d5 51 ♗g3 ♖e5 0-1 L.McShane-N.Borge, Politiken Cup, Copenhagen 1998.

10...♘xd4 11 ♗xd4 h6!

Immediately putting the question to White's dark-squared bishop. From now on White must be ex-

remely wary of discovered attacks on his queen.



12 ♖d2?

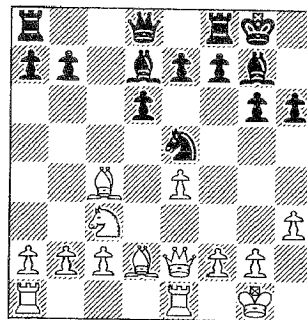
There are a couple of interesting stories behind this move.

Based on a game in which English GM John Emms defeated the Belgium IM (now GM) Alberto David, 'Lucky' Luke knew that the comparatively recent comprehensive project *Nunn's Chess Openings* recommended this line as being '±'. Alas, his luck was about to run out thanks to a nifty bit of home preparation. What you need to know for now is that, the night before, I was rather expecting to play Luke and it seemed likely to me that the game would reach this point. Unfortunately, when the pairings came out, the new Grandmaster was in fact playing the only other Dragon player on our score group.

Out of the alternatives here, 12 ♖h4 g5 13 ♖g3 ♘h5 looks better for Black while 12 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 13 ♗d3 ♖g7!?, avoiding 14 e5 and 15 ♗xg6, is also not very appetising for the first player. I would therefore have to conclude that if White wants to keep this line in business then he must investigate the not particularly inspiring retreat 12 ♖c1 (at least providing the white queen with

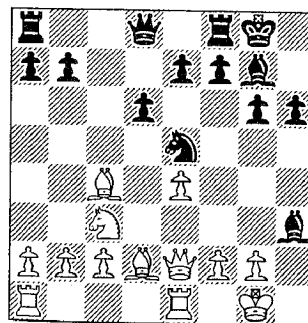
other options in the event of 12...♘g4). Indeed, it appeared that after another embarrassing high-profile incidence of a promising English junior blindly following *NCO* analysis, a hasty reprint followed with the alteration '12 ♖c1=.'

12...♘g4 13 ♗d3 ♘e5 14 ♗e2



Here, as previously mentioned, *NCO* (And, by the way, don't think I'm getting on this book's case because I know that a lot of work went into it and it's actually quite useful. The authors were just a bit unlucky in this case!) originally gave 14...♘xc4 15 ♗xc4 with a slight edge to White. In fact because of 15...b5!?, this is an assessment of which I am doubtful anyway. So the big point is that now comes the stunning blow.

14...♖xh3!!



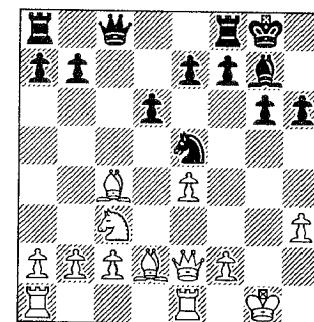
Playing in the same tournament and watching this encounter, I was somewhat miffed. It wasn't inconceivable that Sune Berg Hansen and myself were the only two players in the world that had found this move while independently studying at home. Well, okay, perhaps there are hundreds of Dragon boffins out there that had spotted this disparity with theory, but anyway, as far as I was concerned, it could so easily have been me playing Black. Barely having to move into second gear and, if I know Sune, probably spending most of his time on the clock wondering what thrills awaited his social life that evening, he had basically achieved a won position straight from the opening.

With a little prompting, the analysis modules that I have go bananas for this move.

15 gxf3

As the g4-square is otherwise available to Black, there is no practical alternative.

15...♗c8



The point. Black simultaneously attacks the c-bishop and the h-pawn.

16 ♖b3

16 ♖d3 is no better e.g. 16...♗xh3 17 f4 ♘f3+ 18 ♖f2 ♘xd2 19 e5 (Blocking out this bishop is the only chance. Note the

immediate 19 ♖xd2 is not possible because of 19...♖h2+ 20 ♖e3 ♖d4+ winning the queen) 19...♖h4+ 20 ♖e3 dxc5 21 ♖xd2 ♖xf4+ 22 ♖d1 f5 with a lot of pawns for the piece and basically a tremendous position!

Regarding the second incident that I mentioned, you can imagine my surprise when, just a week later, I saw on the demo board covering the second round British Championship encounter between Julian Hodgson and Harriet Hunt, England's top lady fall into exactly the same trap as Luke and for exactly the same reasons. At the time you could sense that 'Jules' was chuffed with the outcome of some opening preparation but possibly this worked against him as 'Hatty' had the last laugh by scraping a draw.

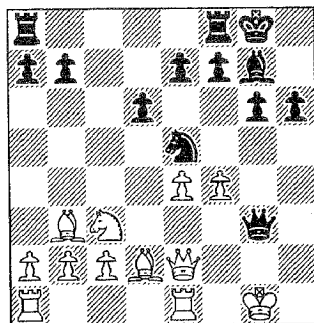
Instead, this game continued with 16 ♖d5 ♖xh3 17 f4 ♖g3+ 18 ♖f1 (18 ♖h1? ♖f3 is winning pretty much on the spot. Barring the spite check on e7 there is nothing much White can do about ...♖h3+ save ♖f2 which runs into ...♖h4+.) 18...♖g4 19 ♖g2 ♖h2+ 20 ♖g1 ♖f3 21 ♖f1 ♖h2+ 22 ♖g1 ♖f3+ 23 ♖f1 ♖xg2+ 24 ♖xg2 ♖xd2 25 ♖xc7 ♖h7 26 ♖d3 ♖fe8 27 ♖d5 ♖ac8 28 c3 ♖c4 29 ♖c2. Eventual title winner Julian Hodgson is a friend of mine and a nice guy. Frankly though, in my opinion he was looking way too smug throughout this game, while I was even more gutted that lightning had struck twice without once hitting me (well you know what I mean!). Yes, perhaps not believing his luck that the English WGM had made the same mistake as Luke only a week earlier, he perhaps got too complacent. Added to the fact that despite her pawn minus, White has a tough position to break down, Harriet's

tenacious defence helped earn her a share of the spoils, an eventual ½-½, H.Hunt-J.Hodgson, Scarborough 1999.

16...♖xh3

With 17...♖f3+ in the offing, the black queen and knight prove to be a devastating combination.

17 f4 ♖g3+



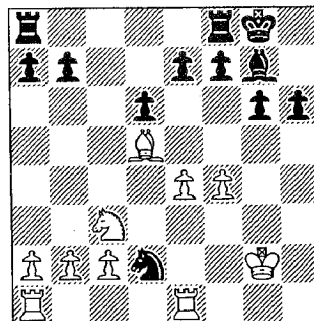
18 ♖f1

18 ♖g2 ♖f3+ would transpose to the game, while 18 ♖h1? ♖f3 is lethal.

18...♖g4!

19...♖h2+ is threatened and Black is certainly looking to win more than just a rook and two pawns for two minor pieces.

19 ♖g2 ♖h2+ 20 ♖g1 ♖f3+ 21 ♖f1 ♖xg2+ 22 ♖xg2 ♖xd2 23 ♖d5



Vaguely hoping to trap the knight on d2, but neither is there anywhere safe for the bishop...

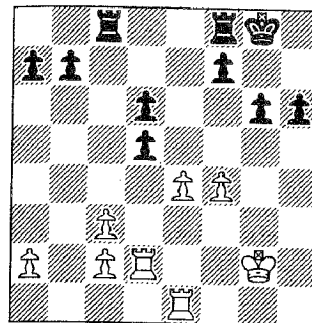
23...e6 24 ♖ad1

24 ♖xb7 ♖ab8 25 ♖a6 ♖xb2 leaves White's own knight unguarded.

24...exd5 25 ♖xd2 ♖xc3

The simplest route to victory as the rook and pawn endgame is easy to play.

26 bxc3 ♖ac8



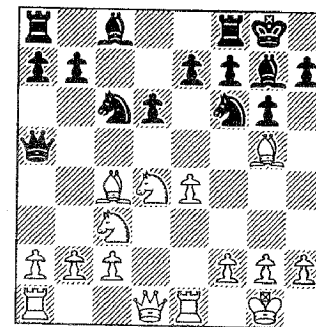
Black is two pawns up. For the rest of the game the Danish Grandmaster demonstrates more than adequate technique to bring home the bacon!

27 ♖xd5 ♖xc3 28 ♖xd6 ♖xc2+ 29 ♖g3 ♖fc8 30 f5 ♖8c6 31 ♖d7 ♖xa2 32 ♖xb7 ♖g7 33 ♖d1 g5 34 ♖d3 ♖c1 35 ♖f3 ♖f1+ 36 ♖e3 g4 37 ♖d4 ♖a4+ 38 ♖d5 h5 39 ♖c3 ♖a5+ 40 ♖d4 ♖f4 41 ♖c8 ♖a4+ 42 ♖d5 ♖axe4 43 ♖cc7 ♖d4+ 0-1

Now 44 ♖e5 ♖fe4 is mate, while 44 ♖c5 ♖c4+ would allow a simple trade of rooks with the f-pawn being bagged too.

Game 5
A.Komora White
S.Ovsejevich Black
Pardubice Open 1999

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 g6 6 ♖c4 ♖g7 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♖e1 ♖c6 9 ♖g5 ♖a5!?



Introducing a new dimension to Black's play, although I must stress that there is nothing wrong with 9...♖d7. Then, only 10 ♖b3 would be independent of anything seen so far. Naturally, as you can rely on me (?!), precisely that sequence is covered in the notes to the next and final game of this chapter.

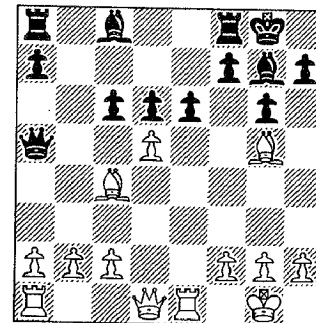
10 ♖d5

White must be a little careful now. His bishop is attacked but 10 ♖d2? obviously sees this queen overworked after 10...♖xd4, while 10 ♖e3 walks into (remember just one of the reasons why h3 is so useful) 10...♖g4.

10...♖xd5 11 ♖xc6

Undesirable but necessary as the d4-knight was attacked twice.

11...bxc6 12 exd5 e6!



Taking advantage of the fact that the d5-pawn is pinned to the

g5-bishop. For all intents and purposes an exchange sac, but sit back and enjoy the growth of the black pawn majority.

13 ♖e7

After 13 ♖d2 ♖c5, White has no chance of doing anything with his d-pawn as his other bishop is attacked.

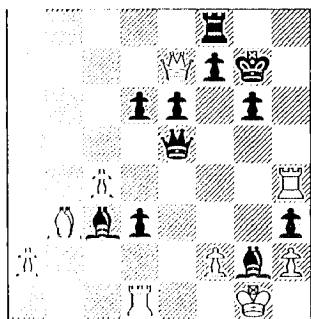
13...cxd5 14 ♖xf8 ♖xf8 15 ♖f3

15 ♖b3 ♖xb2 16 ♖b1 ♖c3 is like the game but without the same white piece activity.

15...♖b8 16 ♖b3 ♖xb2 17 ♖ad1 ♖g7 18 ♖c3 d4 19 ♖ed3 ♖a6 20 c4 ♖c3

Actually 20...dxc3 21 ♖xd6 ♖xb3! 22 axb3 (or 22 ♖d7 ♖f5) 22...c2 may have prompted a quicker resignation.

21 ♖c4 ♖b7 22 ♖h4 ♖e5 23 ♖h3 h5 24 ♖c7 ♖c4 25 ♖xa7 ♖f8 26 ♖g3 h4 27 ♖g4 h3 28 ♖h4 ♖xp2 29 ♖c7 d3



Yes, ...d2 and ...♖e1+ is imminent.

30 ♖h7+ ♖g8 31 ♖h4 d2 0-1

Game 6

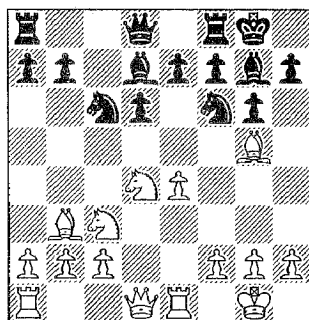
R.Pert White

C.Ward Black

British Championship 1999

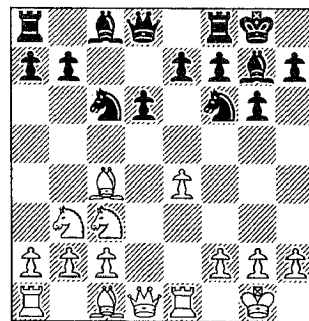
1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 g6 6 ♖c4 ♖g7 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♖e1 ♖c6 9 ♖b3

Before moving on, I'd like to say a last word on 9 ♖b3 ♖d7 10 ♖g5



With this final permutation it may appear that White benefits by saving a tempo on what I have constantly argued is a useful h2-h3. However, after 10...h6, White has an awkward problem of what to do with his bishop. The point is that after the obvious 11 ♖h4 (remember 11 ♖e3, as usual, falls foul of 11...♖g4!) 11...♖xd4 12 ♖xd4 g5! 13 ♖g3 ♖h5, though having slightly weakened his kingside, Black will soon net the cherished bishop. Furthermore, backing up a bit, just as in the main game Black could try to take advantage of the omission of h3 by 9...♖g4!?

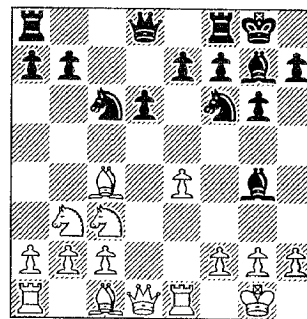
Anyway back to the main game and the position reached below:



9 ♖b3, never seen before, was actually an interesting idea, effectively

switching from the more typical 6 ♖c4 lines to the realms of the Classical Variation. White's queenside looks a little congested with the blocking of the bishop's obvious square of retreat, but there is a devious point behind his move-order. He is playing along the lines of the more recently popular ♖e1 and ♖f1 Classical line in which the bishop goes back home in order to keep the e-file clear. Here, though, not only does the bishop not need to move again in order to get out of the rook's way, but the c4-g8 diagonal showed more promise. Indeed, even from f1 White's light-squared bishop will often later venture out to c4.

9...♖g4!



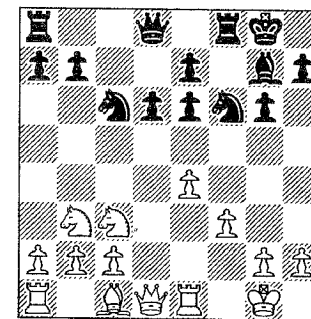
The previous comments seemed to put forward a pretty convincing argument in favour of this novel concept and, indeed, had he not been playing me, I might have suggested that the up-and-coming English junior deserved more for his innovative play! Unfortunately the text helps expose its frailties. White is short of pieces on the kingside and, with his dark-squared bishop undeveloped and the lack of cover from the light-squared bishop, it seems his queen is posed an

awkward question. A rare case when the proverb 'there's no place like home!' does not ring true.

10 f3

Although this adds support to the e-pawn, all things considered this is probably detrimental to White's position as holes are created and the king exposed along the b6-g1 diagonal.

10...♖e6!? 11 ♖xe6 fxe6

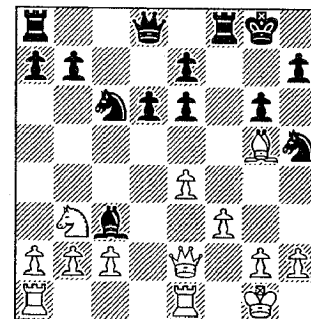


This central pawn structure is not undesirable for Black who now has control over the key d5-square as well as the half-open f-file. It's true that the e6-pawn could conceivably become a weakness but it's not easy to see how White might attack it.

12 ♖g5 ♖h5

Opening up the Dragon bishop and preparing to invade on f4.

13 ♖e2 ♖xc3!?



By no means forced but rather a practical decision to help randomise the position and thus increase winning chances. Of course, there are always risks associated with conceding the Dragon bishop, especially while its opposite number is still floating around. However, the not unreasonable hope is that the rook and knight will help patch up any dark squared weaknesses now created.

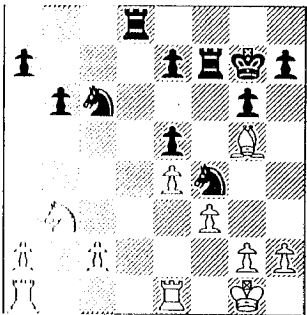
14 bxc3 ♗f4 15 ♖d2

Of course, White must fight to retain his bishop in order to claim compensation for his shattered queenside.

15...e5 16 e4 ♖f7 17 e5

White is naturally eager to try and eliminate his pawn weaknesses, but even after the forthcoming trade there is still the problem of his queenside isolanis to deal with.

17...dxc5 18 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 19 ♗xc5 b6 20 ♗b3 ♖g7



20...♗b4 looked tempting but the text removes any later ideas of restriction by ♗h6 that may have been on White's agenda.

21 e4 ♖f8 22 ♖xf4

Effectively accepting that Black stands better. However, the offside bishop no longer posed a threat to the black king, while the f4-knight had some menacing possibilities.

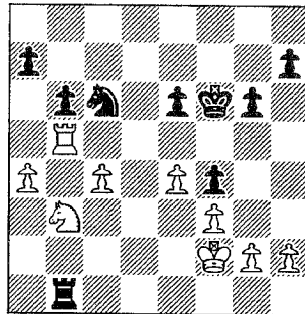
22...exf4 23 ♖ed1 ♖f6 24 a4 ♖xd1+ 25 ♖xd1 ♖d8 26 ♖d5

With the black king so active, White would have struggled after a direct trade of rooks. He therefore encourages Black to swap on his own terms.

26...e6

The offer is declined as Black naturally does not want to improve White's pawn structure. Things now live up as both rooks see a bit of action.

27 ♖b5 ♖d1+ 28 ♖f2 ♖b1



"All rook and pawn endings are drawn" is the reason why Black eschews a trade of knights by 28...♗d4. Instead he (i.e. me!) makes it difficult for White to continue with his strategy of eliminating the queenside pawns.

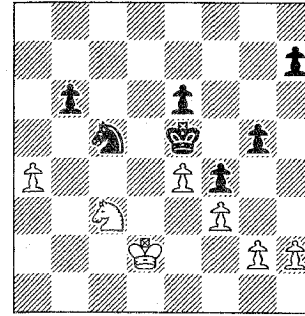
29 e5 ♖b2+ 30 ♖f1 ♖b1+ 31 ♖f2 ♗e5 32 cxb6 axb6 33 ♗d4

The indirect defence of the b-pawn is seen in the line: 33 ♖xb6? ♗d3+ 34 ♖e2 ♖xb3 35 ♖xb3 ♗c1+.

33...♖xb5 34 ♗xb5

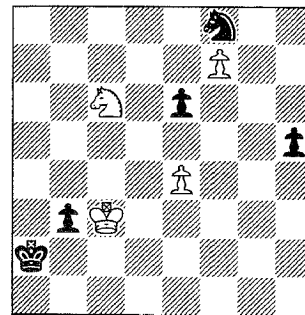
Instead 34 axb5 would have left White purely on the defensive, with 34... ♗c4 35 ♖e2 ♗d6 likely to witness the downfall of White's b-pawn.

34...♗d3+ 35 ♖e2 ♗c5 36 ♗c3 ♖e5 37 ♗d2 g5



Defending the f4-pawn and thus preparing the paralysing ...♗d4-c4. White now tries to generate some counterplay, but is fighting a losing battle.

38 g3 fxd3 39 hxd3 ♗d4 40 ♗b5+ ♖c4 41 ♗d6+ ♖b4 42 f4 gxf4 43 gxf4 ♖xa4 44 f5 b5 45 f6 ♗d7 46 f7 b4 47 ♗c4 ♖b3 48 ♗e5 ♗f8 49 ♖d3 ♖a2 50 ♗c6 b3 51 ♖c3 h5



The black knight's attitude is "I'm doing my job. Let's see you do

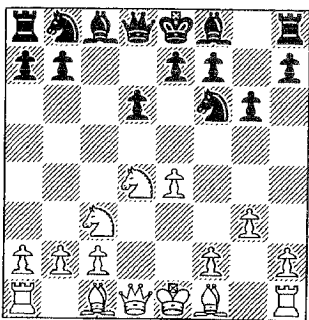
yours!". A passed rook's pawn is not what a knight likes to see!

52 ♗b4+ ♖a3 53 ♗d3 h4 54 ♖d4 h3 0-1

I hope that you have been able to wade through the variety of different piece permutations available to White and a couple of very playable alternatives here and there for Black. At the end of the day what's important is that you take in the ideas, but if you have a fixation of having to have an answer for everything (and you think that there is a possibility that I may have provided it?!) then the variations index at the end of the book offers a quick reference guide. Assuming the normal black moves have been played, (completing the fianchetto, castling and ...♗c6) I have attempted to differentiate between the various white systems and pinpointed the page where you can locate the sequence of White moves you are after. Moves such as h3, 0-0, ♖e1, ♖b3, ♖e3 (or ♖g5) can be played in different orders and thus there are transpositions. However usually one or two of them must be left out in the first nine or ten moves and the absentee(s) may dictate a different response by Black. Note that while 9...♖d7 is invariably just fine, there are cases where an alternative 9th move is also interesting.

10 The g3 system

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♕c3 g6 6 g3



I was rather hoping to avoid this chapter but, not surprisingly, it was always around to haunt me whenever I thought I was close to the completion of this book!

Renowned as a fairly insipid system, White eschews the other sensible options for his light-squared bishop in favour of a fashionable fianchetto. Though I could be sarcastic regarding White's decision to develop his bishop to a square where its view is obscured by his own pawn, I won't (surprised, huh?). My reason is that, although this bishop rarely becomes a thrilling piece, the e4-pawn is offered support and can be a real thorn if ever transferred to d5. Nevertheless the bishop's comparatively poor scope and the lack of control over the so often vital e4-square provide an optimistic case for Black who

should just knuckle down and get on with things.

From the above illustrative position I would definitely recommend 6...♗c6!, as this move might be difficult to arrange once White has his bishop on g2. In case you were wondering, it is the threat to unleash the bishop by e4-e5 (after a preliminary ♗xc6 bxc6) that is worrying and indeed tricky to avoid after the autopilot 6...♗g7 (7 ♗g2). Of course, following 6...♗c6!, possible is 7 ♗xc6?! bxc6 and then 8 ♗g2 but then White will have deprived his knight of the cherished d5-square and all Black need do is protect his c6-pawn to avert the threat of 9 e5.

After 6...♗c6! White has to make a decision about his d4-knight. The first part of this chapter sees him remaining firm in the centre with 7 ♗g2. However this allows a simplifying 7...♗xd4 and really, if White is more ambitious, he should try to compliment his evident space advantage by keeping pieces on. The more testing 7 ♗de2 is discussed in Games 4-6.

In *WTTD* I described the game in which Garry Kasparov scraped a draw with yours truly, but that's old hat now and, besides, the guy isn't even World Champion any more! Well, okay, he's still quite handy and, although it was only in a simultaneous exhibition, here I refuse to stoop to the levels of blowing my

own trumpet (I've done that enough in the other chapters!).

On that note it's fitting that I should start with a Dragon win for the new reigning king (well one of them!) of the chessboard:

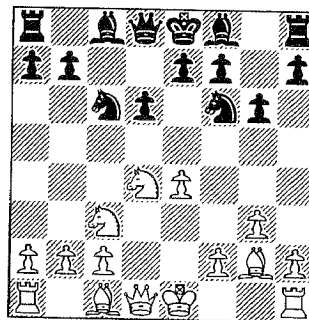
Game 1
M.Adams White
V.Kramnik Black
Wijk aan Zee 1998

1 e4 e5 2 ♗f3 ♗c6 3 ♗c3 d6 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♗xd4 ♗f6 6 g3 g6

This began as a Classical Sicilian, but now transposes into a Dragon variation. Besides the g3 systems, we have already seen such transpositions frequently occurring in the Classical lines (chapter 8).

7 ♗g2

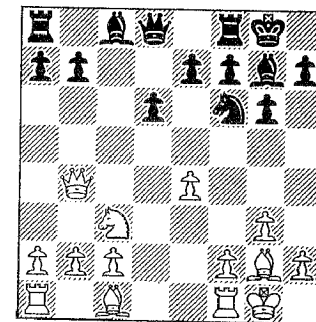
Results in practical play indicate that this continuation causes Black few problems and this is why I soon move on to 7 ♗de2.



7...♗xd4

Luring the queen into the centre. Ordinarily, her majesty might be well-placed in the middle but, with the Dragon bishop soon loitering with intent, it must soon abandon its post anyway.

8 ♖xd4 ♗g7 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♖b4

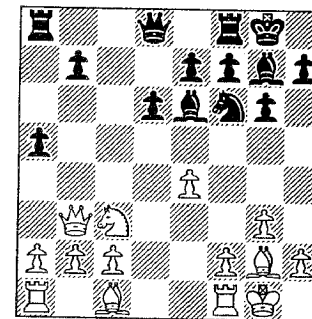


The queen must soon move to avoid a discovered attack and in fact this was the preference of Garry Kasparov (who is still world number 1!) in a simultaneous when I was just a budding Dragoner.

10...a5!?

Black accepts the weakening of the b5-square in a quest to hunt down the white queen.

11 ♖b3 ♗e6



12 ♗d5

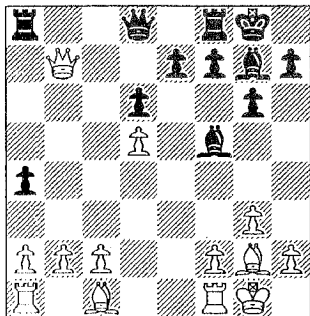
Assessed as unclear is the immediate 12 ♖xb7 with earlier analysis running 12...♗c4 13 e5 ♗xf1 14 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 15 ♗xa8 dxe5 16 ♗xf1 ♖xa8 17 a4 e6 18 ♖a3 ♖c8 19 ♖b3 ♗f8. However, 12...♗d7! is surely deserving of attention. White must be careful not to get his queen trapped while, if his knight moves,

regaining the b-pawn with ...♖b8 is always likely.

12...a4

Practically forcing the white queen to grab a pawn and enter the lion's den.

13 ♖xb7 ♜xd5 14 exd5 ♙f5



White has snatched a pawn, but his queenside is coming under heavy fire. Already the black bishop-pair are putting their oar in and the rooks are champing at the bit to enter the fray.

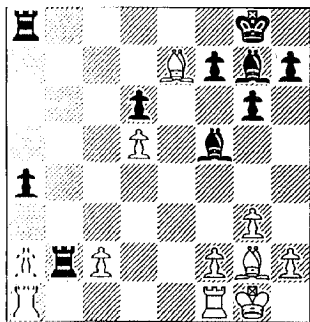
15 ♙g5 ♖b8! 16 ♖xb8

Both 16 ♖c6? ♜c8 and 16 ♖xe7? ♜c8 lose the queen.

16...♜fxb8

White is a pawn up and the one on c7 is *en prise* too. Nevertheless Black's tremendously active pieces are poised to strike at White's queenside.

17 ♙xc7 ♜xb2



White has a poor light-squared bishop (as I've previously explained, an obvious drawback of this whole system) and time is running out for his a- and c-pawns.

18 a3 ♜xc2 19 ♜ae1 ♜a6

Protecting his d-pawn, with the realistic expectation that White's a-pawn will one day be his. Here it is interesting to take a look at the relative use of the fianchettoed bishops. Clearly White's pales in comparison.

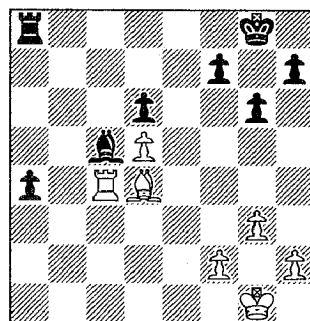
20 ♙e4 ♙xc4 21 ♜xe4 ♙b2 22 ♜fe1 ♜c1!

Taking care, as 22...♙xa3?? 23 ♙f6 with an unstoppable mate, would be disastrous.

23 ♜xc1 ♙xc1 24 ♙f6 ♜a8

A time out was required to guard the back rank mate but the a4-pawn's days are numbered.

25 ♜c4 ♙xa3 26 ♙d4 ♙c5!



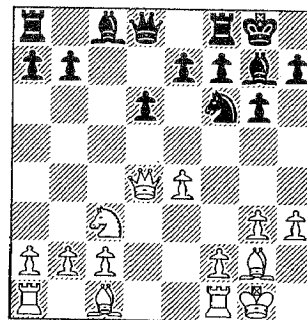
The simplest continuation. Rooks belong behind passed pawns and that is exactly where Black's rook is.

27 ♙xc5 dxc5 28 ♜xc5 a3 29 ♜c1 a2 0-1

Here the currently (i.e. at the time of writing) world ranked number 4 English GM resigned as 30 ♜a1 is forced when the best that he could hope for is a lost king and pawn ending.

Game 2
P.Svidler White
B.Gelfand Black
Rubinstein Memorial 2000

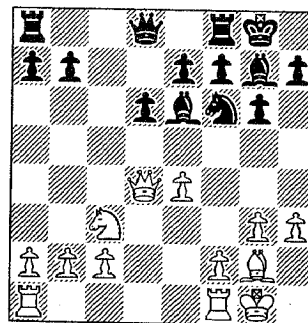
1 e4 e5 2 ♘e3 d6 3 ♘ge2 ♘f6 4 g3 ♘c6 5 ♙g2 g6 6 d4 exd4 7 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 8 ♖xd4 ♙g7 9 0-0 0-0 10 h3



Not fearing an immediate discovered attack on his queen, White takes time to include a useful little move.

10...♙e6

A natural developing move which at the same time threatens ...♘d5. Note that there isn't anything particularly wrong with the 10...♙d7 of *WWTB* and in fact 10...♖a5!? has also been quite successful.



11 ♖b4

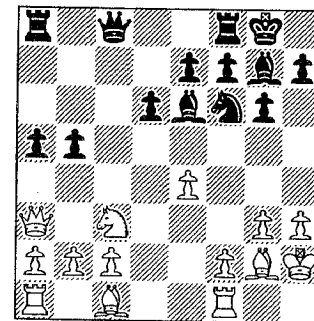
Black's next move is pretty much the universal treatment but, against 11 ♖d3?, especially effective is 11...♖c8! as it hits the pawn on h3 while threatening 12...♙c4.

After 11 ♖d1 ♖c8!? 12 ♖h2 ♖c4 13 a4 ♜ac8 14 a5 ♘d7 15 ♜a3 ♖c7 16 f4, in the high-powered encounter S.Makarichev-P.Svidler, Elista 1995, Black chose to accept a potentially hot pawn by 16...♙xc3!? 17 ♜xc3 (after 17 bxc3 ♖c5 the shattered white queenside pawn structure compensates Black for his absent bishop) 17...♖xa5 18 f5 ♙c4 19 ♜f4 ♙a6 20 fxg6 hxg6 21 ♜h4 ♜xc3 22 ♙d2 ♜fc8! 23 ♙xc3 ♜xc3. It seems his decision was justified as he went on to gain the full point.

11...♖c8 12 ♖h2 a5

The difference between this position and the last game is that the b-pawn is not sacrificed...YET!

13 ♖a3 b5!



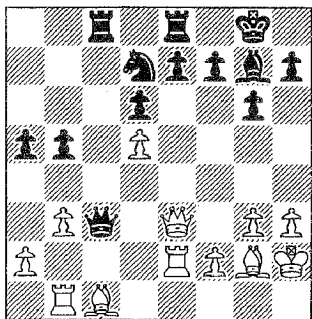
14 ♘d5

Actually, 14 ♘b5? is not a gift, as; apart from the c2-pawn, Black has the forking 14...♙c4.

14...♙xd5 15 exd5 ♖xc2

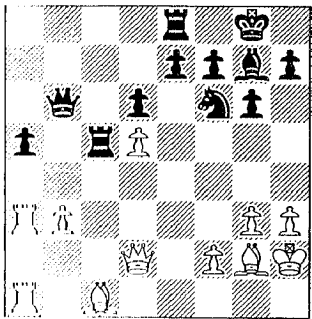
White has the two bishops but one is tied down to b2 while the other (as so often is the case) simply bites on granite. Besides, this activates the queen—and a pawn is a pawn!

16 ♖e3 ♜f8 17 ♞e1 ♝d7 18 ♞e2 ♜c4 19 b3 ♜c3 20 ♞b1 ♞ac8



Playing it cool. Black may be material up but, if at all, he still prefers to trade queens on his own terms.

21 ♙e4 ♜f6 22 ♙g2 b4 23 a3 bxa3 24 ♞a2 ♜c5 25 ♜d2 ♜b5 26 ♞xa3 ♞c5 27 ♞ba1 ♜b6



White is ganging up on Black's a-pawn but his own b-pawn is equally weak. Clearly, Black is in no hurry to commit his knight just for the sake of attacking the rook with the bishop.

28 ♜d1 ♞b5 29 ♙e3 ♜c7 30 ♜d3 ♞eb8 31 ♜c4 ♜d8 32 ♙d2 ♜b6 33 ♙e3 ♜d8

Admittedly, from what started off as a pretty good opening position for Black, there is a lot of faffing

around in this game, but all comes good in the end.

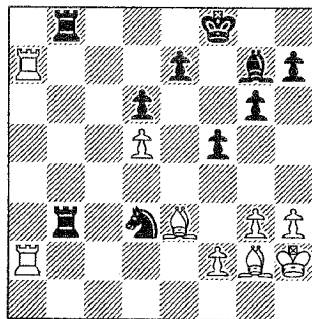
34 ♙d2 ♝d7 35 ♞1a2 ♜e5 36 ♜a4 ♞b4! 37 ♜xa5

After 37 ♙xb4 axb4 the a3-rook would be trapped.

37... ♜xa5 38 ♞xa5 ♞xb3 39 ♞a7 ♜f8 40 ♙g5 f6

Often an ugly move, there is no knight ready to infiltrate on e6 and this is only a temporary measure.

41 ♙f4 ♝d3 42 ♙e3 f5

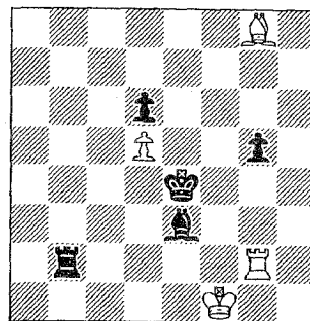


See what I mean. The extra Black pawn will tell.

43 ♙f1 ♙f6 44 ♞2a3 ♜e1 45 ♞xb3 ♞xb3 46 ♙a6 ♞a3 47 ♙e2 ♞b3 48 ♙a6 ♙g5

The bishop is indirectly protected because of the check on f3.

49 ♞a8+ ♜g7 50 ♙a7 ♙f6 51 ♙c8 ♞a3 52 ♙e6 ♜f3+ 53 ♜g2 ♝d4 54 ♞g8+ ♜h6 55 ♙b6 ♞a6 56 ♙xd4 ♙xd4 57 f4 ♞a2+ 58 ♜h1 ♞a3 59 ♜g2 ♞a2+ 60 ♜h1 ♙f2 61 g4 fxg4 62 hxg4 ♙e3 63 ♞f8 ♞a4 64 g5+ ♜h5 65 ♞h8 ♙xf4 66 ♞xh7+ ♜xg5 67 ♞xe7 ♜f6 68 ♞f7+ ♜e5 69 ♞h7 ♞a2 70 ♞h3 ♜e4 71 ♜g1 ♙e3+ 72 ♜f1 g5 73 ♞g3 ♞f2+ 74 ♜g1 ♞b2+ 75 ♜f1 ♜f4 76 ♞g2 ♞b1+ 77 ♜e2 ♞b2+ 78 ♜f1 ♞b1+ 79 ♜e2 ♜e4 80 ♙g8 ♞b2+ 81 ♜f1 ♞b1+ 82 ♜e2 ♞b2+ 83 ♜f1



83... ♞b3 84 ♜e2 ♞a3 85 ♙f7 ♙f4 86 ♙e6 ♙g3 87 ♙f7 g4 88 ♙h5 ♞e3+ 89 ♜d2 ♙e1+ 90 ♜d1 g3 0-1

So the talented young Russian Peter Svidler is winning with Black but, in this same Dragon line, losing with White. I wonder if that tells us something?

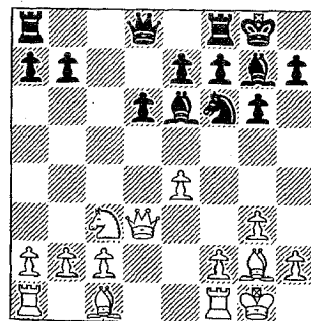
Game 3

J.Netzer White
V.Nevednichy Black
Selestat Open 2000

1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♜xd4 ♜f6 5 ♜c3 d6 6 g3 g6 7 ♙g2 ♜xd4 8 ♜xd4 ♙g7 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♜d3

A not unusual square for a fair enough retreat.

10... ♙e6

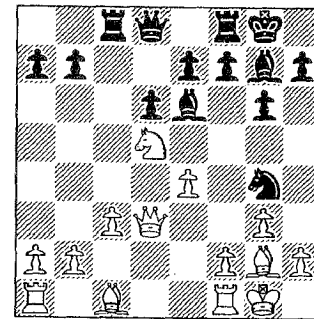


11 ♜d5

To avoid the trap (just seen in the last game) 11 h3? ♜c8! White could

try 11 b3, but after 11... ♞c8 12 ♙b2 ♜a5 the pressure builds up on c3 and our favourite diagonal. Indeed, 13 ♜d1 d5! 14 e5 ♜e4 15 ♜e3 ♜c3 was eventually won by Black in the marathon encounter, A.Stavrinov-M.Krakops, Riga 1993, and also I can't see anything wrong with 14... ♜g4!?

11... ♞c8 12 c3 ♜g4!?

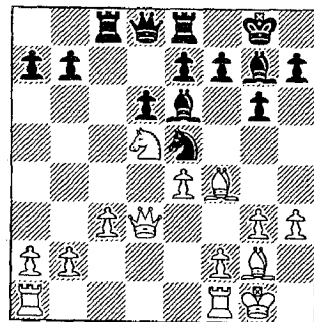


While avoiding the temptation to swap on d5 and give White the pressure on e7 that he wants, Black sends his knight on a journey to look for a suitable home.

13 ♙f4 ♞e8

So often the key to these types of positions is to refrain from capturing the knight that annoyingly occupies the handy d5 post. The text is a useful precaution that liberates the black queen from its shackles of defending the e7-pawn.

14 h3 ♜e5



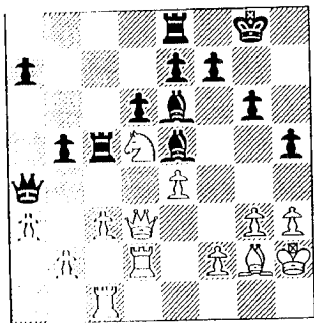
15 ♖xe5

The sceptics amongst you may well criticise me for my choice of illustrative game, as you might think that White deserves to lose for conceding his bishop so cheaply. You may have a point but the knight would have been a real thorn on c4 and, anyway, the rest of the game is quite instructive.

15... ♖xe5 16 ♖fd1 ♖c5 17 ♖ac1 ♣d7 18 ♣h2 ♣a4

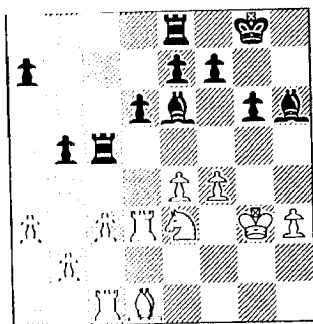
Black immediately starts to probe although 18... ♖ec8 and 18...b5 also stood out as sound continuations.

19 a3 b5 20 ♖d2 h5!?



If allowed, ...h4 and ...hxg3+ will leave White with an inferior pawn structure.

21 f4 ♖g7 22 ♖f3 h4 23 ♖d1 hxg3! 24 ♖xg3 ♣c4 25 ♖e3 ♣xd3 26 ♖xd3 ♖h6



Place your bets as to whether the white king will be able to hold things together!

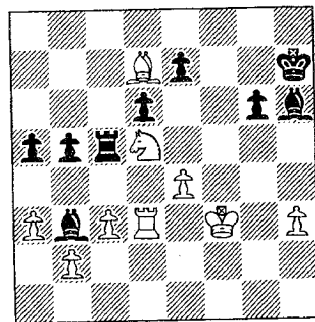
27 ♖c2 ♣h7 28 ♖g4 ♖b3 29 ♖f2 ♖f8 30 f5

Preventing Black from getting in the same move but conceding the e5-square.

30... ♖e5 31 fxg6+ fxg6 32 ♖xf8 ♖xf8 33 ♣f3 ♖h6

There is still some work to be done but, in this open endgame, the bishop-pair are favourite to complete the job.

34 ♖d7 ♖c5 35 ♖d5 a5



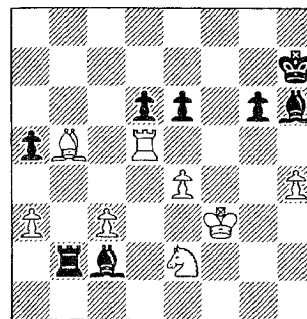
Getting the queenside pawns warmed up in anticipation of the odd white pawn dropping off to a future ...♖c1 (that said, I don't see much wrong with that immediately either).

36 ♖f4

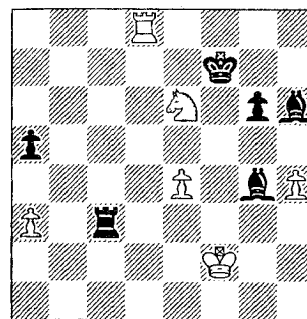
36 ♖xe7 ♖c1 37 ♖xd6 ♖xb2 leaves White's pieces poorly positioned to deal with Black's forthcoming pawn rush.

36... ♖e5 37 ♖e8 ♖g5 38 h4 ♖g1 39 ♖e2 ♖f1+ 40 ♖g2 ♖b1 41 ♖xb5 ♖xb2 42 ♣f3 ♖c2 43 ♖d5 e6

Perhaps White could have put up a sterner defence by not giving up a piece, but it wouldn't have been much fun!



44 ♖xd6 ♖xb5 45 ♖d7+ ♖g8 46 ♖d4 ♖d1+ 47 ♖g3 ♖c5 48 ♖xe6 ♖xc3+ 49 ♣f2 ♖g4 50 ♖d8+ ♖f7



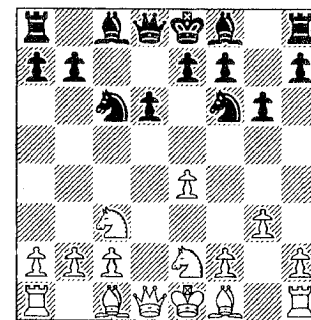
51 ♖g5+ ♖xg5 52 hxg5 ♖xa3 53 ♖d6 ♖f3+ 54 ♖g2 a4 55 e5 ♖f5 56 ♖g3 ♖h5 57 ♖a6 ♖xg5+ 58 ♣f4 ♖g4+ 59 ♖e3 ♖b4 0-1

Game 4
A.Hnydiuk White
V.Popov Black
Cappelle la Grande 2000

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 ♖f6 4 ♖c3 cxd4 5 ♖xd4 g6 6 g3 ♖c6 7 ♖de2

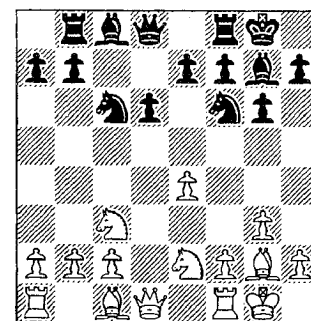
Firstly, I'd like to back-pedal and mention that supporting the knight with 7 ♖e3 just wasn't practical. Generally, in this system, White tends to avoid this move as it leaves the bishop more susceptible to a future ...♖c4, now that the light-squared bishop is not on its more

usual diagonal. Added to the fact that ...♖g4 might be of more immediate concern, this bishop generally stays on c1 until it can realise its dream of advancing to g5. Next, given that the knight has decided to move, e2 must be the most logical choice.



You can see from the above diagram how the knight is placed on the right track to reach the key d5 square, i.e. supporting its colleague on c3 and also having the possibility of jumping to f4. By comparison, the b3-square would offer few prospects for the future, while on f3 it would block the bishop when it fianchettoes on g2.

7... ♖g7 8 ♖g2 0-0 9 0-0 ♖b8!?



A dual-purpose move. Black supports the aggressive queenside push ...b5, while getting off the long diagonal that could provide White

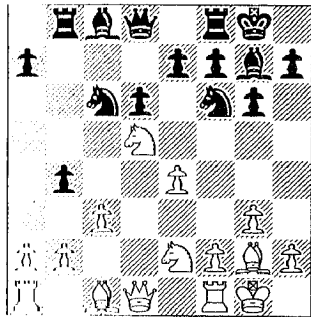
with e4-e5 tricks. Just as in the Closed Sicilian, it goes without saying that this is far more accurate than 9...a6?! (possibly with the same idea in mind).

10 ♖d5?!

I suspect this game demonstrates why, for starters, White is better off throwing in 10 a4 now (and considering ♖d5 next). His rook is, after all, on the a-file, so why should he shy away from opening it? Sure enough, coverage of precisely that move comes in the next game.

10...b5 11 c3 b4!

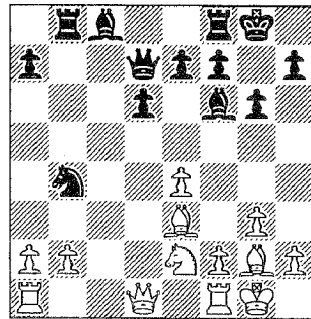
There is no need for Black to hang around and the text gives White something to think about before he exerts pressure on Black's position with ♙g5.



12 cxb4

With or without this capture, the likely outcome was always going to be a trade of a white c-pawn for a black b-pawn. It may appear tempting to try and establish a 'Maroczy Bind' with 12 c4 but, because White cannot gainfully employ his b-pawn (since then the rook will hang on the a1-g7 diagonal), 12...♖a5!? is annoying when his troubles will be compounded after 13 ♗d3 ♙a6.

12...♖xb4 13 ♖xf6+ ♙xf6 14 ♙c3 ♗d7!

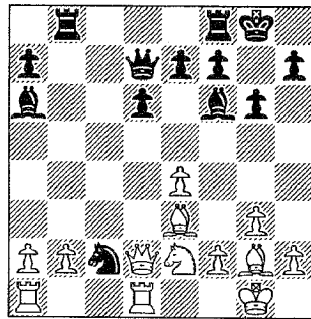


14...♙xb2 15 ♖b1 ♙g7 16 a3 ♖c6 17 ♖xb8 ♖xb8 18 ♙xa7 is not quite as promising for Black as the text continuation.

15 ♗d2 ♙a6

Not only does Black exert heavy pressure on the b2-pawn, but also the d3-square is ripe for invasion as White's light-squared bishop has no influence there whatsoever.

16 ♖fd1 ♖c2!



A nice simple tactic to bag the cherished dark-squared bishop. If the knight is taken then, of course, Black gains the one on e2 in return after 17...♖xb2.

17 ♖ab1 ♖xe3 18 ♗xe3 ♙xb2 19 e5

A sign that White has lost interest, but who can blame him? His strong Grandmaster opponent has already bagged the bishop-pair and a pawn,

while his intended 20 ♗xe5 tactic doesn't work anyway due to White's weak back rank and hanging e2-knight. Ironically, as soon as his light-squared bishop finally sees the light of day, he has to resign!

19...♙xe5 0-1

Game 5

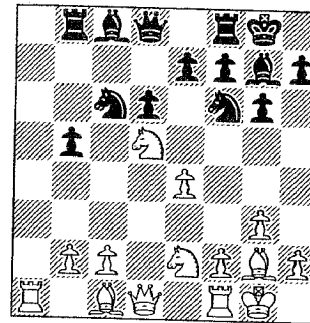
I.Marinković White

A.Kovačević Black

Yugoslav Cup, Ulcinj 1997

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 g6 6 g3 ♖c6 7 ♖de2 ♙g7 8 ♙g2 0-0 9 0-0 ♖b8 10 a4 a6 11 h3

Also 11 ♖d5 b5 12 axb5 axb5.



Now 13 h3 is discussed later while, on principle and as in our last encounter, 13 c3 should be met by 13...b4.

The only other move that springs to mind is 13 ♙g5. Then 13...♖d7 14 ♗c1 ♖e8 15 ♖d1 ♙b7 16 c3 ♖b6 17 h4 ♖d7 18 h5 ♖c5 19 hxg6 hxg6 20 ♗c2 ♗c8 21 ♖d4 ♖xd4 22 cxd4 ♙xd5 23 exd5 ♖a4 24 ♗d2 ♗f5 25 ♙f4 ♖b6 26 ♖e1 ♖xd5 saw Black a clear pawn up in M.Narciso Dublan-G.Shahade, Internet ICC 2000.

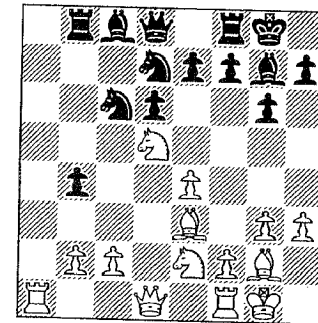
11...b5 12 axb5 axb5 13 ♙e3

Wherever this bishop is moved, the b-pawn becomes more

vulnerable and the rook often tied down to its defence, e.g. 13 ♙g5 ♖d7 14 ♖b1 b4 15 ♖d5 ♖e8 16 ♗d2 ♖de5 17 ♖h2 ♖c4 18 ♗c1 ♙a6 19 ♖e1 b3! 20 ♖ec3 bxc2 21 ♗xc2 h6 22 ♙c1 e6 23 ♖e3 ♖4e5 24 ♖a1 ♖d3 25 ♖d1 ♖c5 26 ♖a4 ♖b4 27 ♗xc5 dxc5 28 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 29 ♖xc5 ♙b5 30 ♖a7 ♙d4 31 ♖c7 ♖a2 32 ♖b3 ♙b6 33 ♖c2 ♙a4 0-1 A. Van Beek-D.Hausrath, Holland 2000, and

13 ♖d5 ♖d7 14 ♖a2 ♖c5 15 ♙g5 h6 16 ♙d2 b4 17 b3 ♙a6 18 ♖e1 e6 19 ♖df4 ♗c7 20 ♙e3 ♖fd8 21 ♖d4 ♖e7 22 ♖de2 ♙b7 23 f3 d5! 24 exd5 e5! 25 ♖d3 ♖xd3 26 cxd3 ♖xd5 27 ♗d2 ♖xe3 28 ♗xe3 ♙d5 29 ♖b1 ♙e6 30 g4 ♖d7 31 ♖h1 ♖bd8 32 ♖d2 ♗a5 33 f4 ♗b5 34 ♙e4 f5 35 gxf5 gxf5 36 ♙g2 ♖xd3 37 ♖xd3 ♖xd3 38 ♗c1 e4 39 ♗f1 ♖xb3 40 ♖d1 ♙c4 0-1 R.Goetz -M.Jirovsky, Germany 1999.

13...b4 14 ♖d5 ♖d7



15 ♖a2

The b2-pawn has to be defended and the rook is more active on a2 than b1. Unfortunately for White, as we soon see, there is a drawback to exposing it in this way.

Whilst I'm here, I'd better point out the trap that many a strong White player has fallen for: 15 ♖d4? ♙xd4! 16 ♙xd4 e6 17 ♖e3

e5 18 ♖a7 ♜b7. GMs K.Georgiev and S.Tiviakov, both Dragon experts, have each netted a piece (for the cut price of the d6-pawn) in this way.

15...e6

Knocking the good-looking knight off its perch. White must be careful as this move is always around to embarrass him.

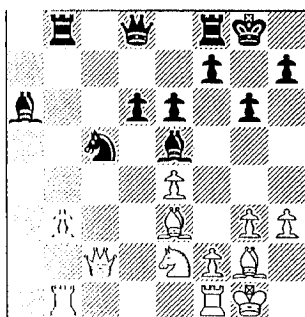
16 ♖d4 b3!

Phase two! Making a target of the soon to be two white b-pawns and vacating a handy square for a black knight.

17 cxb3 ♖b4 18 ♜a1 ♖xb2 19 ♜b1 ♖e5

There was no opportunity for White to nick Black's main weakness: his d-pawn.

20 ♖d3 ♖xd3 21 ♜xd3 ♖c5 22 ♜c2 ♖a6



Not for the first time do we see Black's light-squared bishop become active, while its opposite number remains a comparative bystander.

23 ♜f1 ♜c8

The obvious tactic, 23...♖xb3, would have allowed White to solve his problems with 24 f4! ♖g7 25 ♜xb3 ♜xb3 26 ♜xb3 ♖xe2 27 ♜d2 ♖a6 28 ♜b4. Instead, the white queen must remain on its toes.

24 ♖d4 ♖b7!

Though 24 ♜d2 would have been more cautious, White had hoped to avoid spending another tempo to evacuate his queen. The problem now, though, is that there is no way to prevent 25...♖xe4.

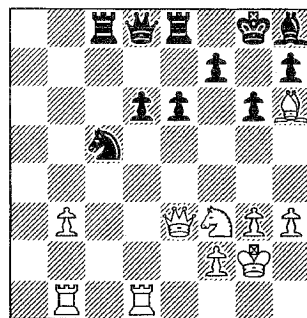
25 ♖h6 ♖xe4 26 ♜d3 ♖c5

The end of a smash and grab raid.

27 ♜e3 ♖xg2 28 ♖xg2

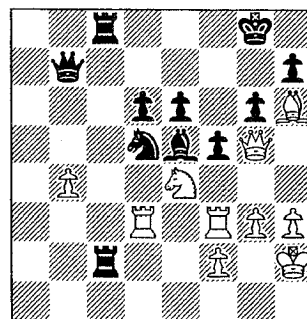
After 28 ♖xf8, both 28...♖e4 and 28...♖xh3!? leave Black with the upper hand.

28...♜e8 29 ♖f3 ♖h8



29...♖g7 would allow White to regain his pawn by 30 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 31 ♜d4+. But, instead, Black just goes by the book and safely converts his material advantage.

30 b4 ♖a4 31 ♜b3 ♖c3 32 ♜d3 ♖d5 33 ♜d2 ♜b6 34 ♖g5 ♜b7 35 ♜f3 ♜c7 36 ♖e4 ♖e5 37 ♖h2 ♜ec8 38 ♜bd3 ♜c2 39 ♜g5 f5



Finally, one of the pawns from Black's hefty majority shows its face and it's "Goodnight Charlie"!

40 ♜xd5 ♖xe4 0-1

Although I didn't really think that there was too much wrong with *WWTD*, here I have obviously tried to provide more up to date practical examples, even if they still illustrate the same points. However, the next game is back by popular demand. In my previous book I found the 7 ♖g2 b6 (intending ...♖a6 or ...♖b7) idea rather cute but there is no doubt that the concept below is more aggressive. It has attracted many players' interest and it's back again with revamped annotations.

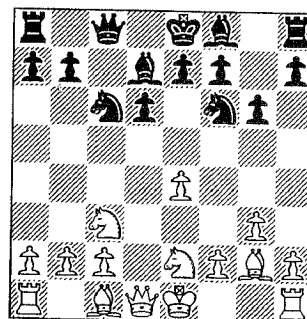
Game 6

S.Kudrin White

S.Rachels Black

USA Championship 1989

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 ♖c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 d6 6 g3 g6 7 ♖de2 ♖d7 8 ♖g2 ♜c8!?



The point behind temporarily delaying ...♖g7. Black prevents White from getting in his typically cushy h3 and 0-0, i.e. he can get in one, but the other is not so easy.

9 ♖d5

Again, if 9 0-0 is played now, White will not be able to get in h3 as Black's bishop and queen both have that square covered. This would leave at Black's disposal not only the g4-square but also the option of a future ...♖h3, followed by the possible attacking follow-up ...h5-h4 (as in the game). Meanwhile, after 9 h3, White will obviously have trouble castling short, while the ♖f1-g1-h2 manoeuvre would be very time-consuming.

9...♖g7 10 0-0 ♖xd5

The drawback of 10...♖h3? is 11 ♖xh3 ♜xh3 12 ♖c7+ ♖d7 13 ♖f4!, kicking away the queen first, rather than the immediate 13 ♖xa8?? ♖g4.

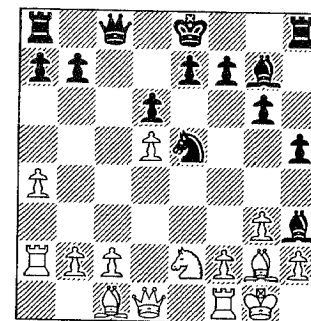
11 exd5 ♖e5 12 a4 ♖h3!?

Ultimately the big idea. Black has deliberately delayed castling because he intends a kingside attack.

13 ♜a2

This may be a slightly bizarre-looking move but White doesn't want to lose his b-pawn and possibly harbours intentions of b3 and c4. However, while White goes all positional on the queenside, Black now gets straight to the point on the other side of the board.

13...h5!

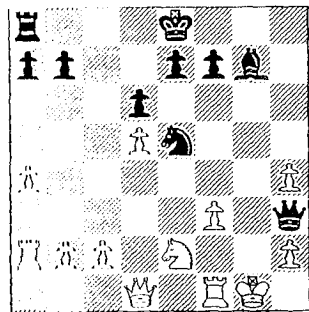


14 ♖xh3 ♜xh3 15 f3

Aside from 15 ♖f4, which only forces a temporary retreat, this was the only way to deal with the looming threat of ...h4 and, of course, the problem of the immediately terminal ...♗g4 and ♖a3!

15...g5! 16 ♖h1

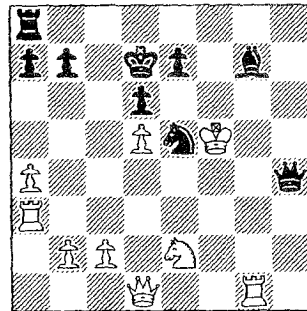
Following my publication of this old game in *WSTD* a question arose concerning 16 ♗xg5 h4! 17 ♗xb4 (upon 17 g4, both 17...♗xg4 and 17...♖a3 work for Black) 17 ♖xb4 18 gxh4.



Specifically, the query was "After losing the exchange, I don't see any possible continuation of Black's attack in view of White's possibilities of ♖a3 and ♖g3".

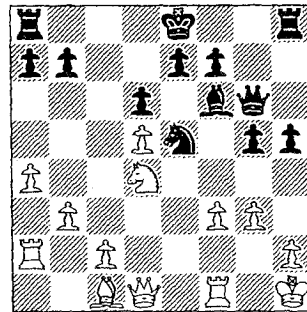
My answer is in the variations: 18...♖xh4 19 ♖f2 ♗xh2 20 ♖g1 (20 ♖h1 ♗g4+ 21 ♖g1 ♖e3+ 22 ♖g2 ♖f2+ 23 ♖h3 ♖f3+ 24 ♗g3 ♖f2) shows why a queen and knight are the most deadly attacking force! 20...♖xh4+ 21 ♖g2 (or, of course, 21 ♖g3 ♗e5) 21...♗g4 22 ♖a3 (the defence mentioned here, at least preventing 22...♗e3+) 22...♖h2+ 23 ♖f3 ♗e5+ 24 ♖e4 (24 ♖e3 ♗h6+ is no better) 24...f5+ 25 ♖xf5 (Also nice is 25 ♖d4 ♖f2+ 26 ♖c3 ♖c8 (intending 27...♖c4

mate!) 27 b3 ♗c4+ 28 ♖xg7 ♖xe3 mate) 25...♖h7+ 26 ♖f4 ♖h4+ 27 ♖f5 (again 27 ♖e3 ♗h6+) 27...♖d7!



(or 27...0-0-0, as both bring in the cavalry!) 28 ♖xg7 ♖f8+ 29 ♖f7 ♖xf7 mate. Essentially then, I would definitely call it *sacrificing* the exchange rather than losing it!

16...♗f6 17 b3 ♖f5 18 ♗d4 ♖g6

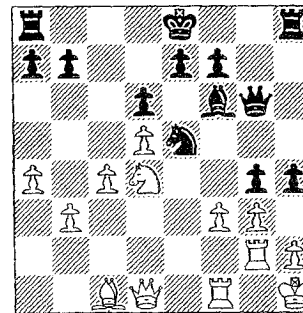


Black still wants to launch the pawns but, understandably, didn't want to get his queen trapped.

19 c4 g4 20 ♖g2

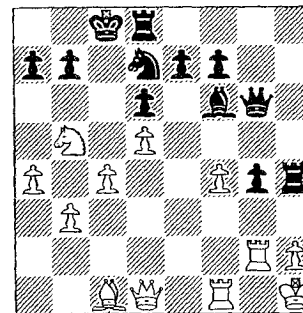
If 20 f4 ♖e4+! and 21 ♖g1 ♖xd4+ 22 ♖xd4 ♗f3+ 23 ♖xf3 ♗xd4+ wins material, while the ugly self-pin 21 ♖g2 ♗d3 22 ♗b5 h4! looks quite deadly.

20...h4



Turning up the heat on the white king.

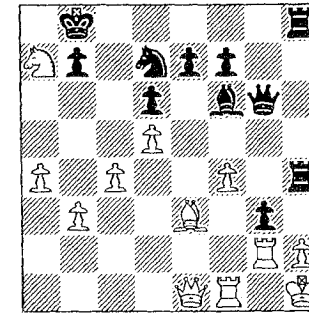
21 gxh4 ♖xh4 22 f4 ♗d7 23 ♗b5 0-0-0!



The continuation White was hoping to dissuade. While White only has his knight in an offensive position, Black now calls into action the only one of his pieces missing out on all the excitement.

24 ♗xa7+ ♖b8 25 ♗e3 ♖dh8 26 ♖e1 g3

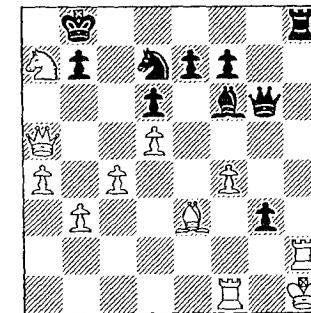
This move was coming whatever White did.



27 ♖a5

27 ♗g1 gxh2! 28 ♖xg6 hxg1=♖+ 29 ♖xg1 fxg6 30 ♗b5 ♖g4+ 31 ♖f2 ♗h4+ is just one alternative conclusion to the game. As played, White throws his queen at the enemy king, leaving his own monarch's fate in the lap of the gods. Needless to say, they weren't in a merciful mood!

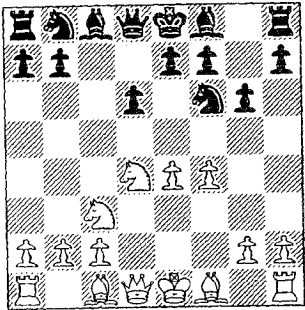
27...♖xh2+ 28 ♖xh2



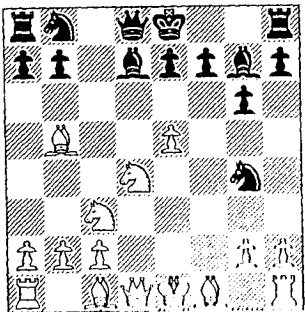
28...♖e4+! 29 ♖g1 ♖xe3+ 0-1

11 Levenfish Attack 6 f4

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 f4

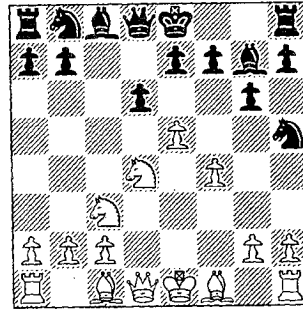


Nothing is ever as it seems these days! With 6 f4 White signals that he may have a swift discobobulating (soon to be in the English dictionary!) e5 and even e6 in mind. Indeed, the good old trap that Black is advised to avoid is 6 ...♗g7 7 e5 dxe5? 8 fxe5 when all of Black's knight evacuating options are grim, e.g. 8...♗g4? 9 ♗b5+ ♗d7 (or 9...♗f8 10 ♗e6+)



10 ♖xg4! oops! (yes the bishop was pinned!).

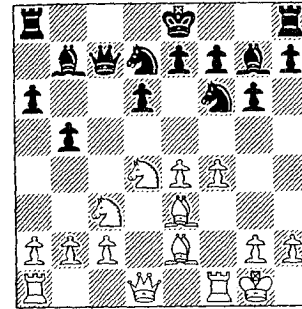
It always seemed easier to me to avoid 6...♗g7 for now, but it would appear that in fact the trend nowadays is for Black to provoke 7 e5 in this manner and meet it with 7...♗h5!?



Sure, knights on the rim are dim but attempting to exploit the dark steed's lack of flight squares here with 8 g4? is well met by 8...♗xf4! (intending 9 ♗xf4 dxe5). Hence instead things get tricky with 8 ♗b5+ ♗d7 9 e6 fxe6 10 ♗xe6. To solve the forking problem, Black offloads his Dragon bishop with 10...♗xc3+ 11 bxc3 and then 11...♖c8. After 12 ♗xd7+ it's rather open to debate how Black should recapture. Most textbooks select the interesting 12...♗xd7 as best because it has the dual advantage of putting the question to the e6-knight while keeping the queen on the c-file. Indeed, after

13 ♗g5 ♖xc3+ 14 ♗d2 ♖c4, Black has obviously won the c-pawn. He also retains the better pawn structure but, on the downside, may miss his bishop and, of course, has his king stuck in the centre.

A simpler option, nipping White's central expansion in the bud, is 6...♗bd7. To be honest, I never really learnt any real theory on this variation but just knew that many Sicilian Najdorf (5...a6) players met 6 f4 with 6...g6. Hence I guess 6...♗bd7 could be substituted for 6...a6, but that move comes soon anyway as Black heads for a formation such as this...



Sure, I've actually given Black more moves than his opponent, but the above diagram helps illustrate some useful points:

a) Having earlier prevented White's e4-e5 push, Black now pressurises the pawn on e4. He has ...b4 in the offing and ...♗c5 is also a possibility.

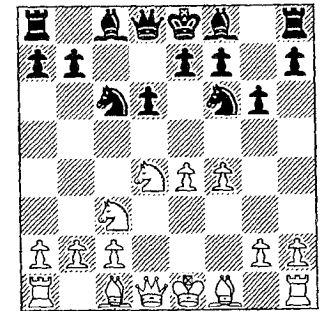
b) Whenever there is a white pawn on f4, the challenging ...e5 is often in the air. This may well secure the e5-square as a home for the black knight, although ...♗b6, aiming for the typically key c4-square, is another straightforward idea.

c) Having the queen on c7 here does interfere with what otherwise might be a successful ...♗xc3 sacrifice. However, it has helped to deter e4-e5 and offers a bit of protection to the d6-pawn should Black desire a switch to a 'Hedgehog' formation with ...e6 (useful for controlling the d5-square). Furthermore the black king is also provided with an alternative, if rather unlikely, option of going to the queenside. I have deliberately left the king in the centre because some may prefer to delay castling kingside to avoid any fast and fruity action by White over there. I'm not necessarily saying that it's a big problem, but, by not committing the monarch, the likes of ♖e1-h4 will not have as much punch.

With all that said and done, I think I'll single out the testing 6...♗c6!? for further attention.

Game 1
G.Sax White
B.Ivanović Black
Vrbas 1980

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♘c3 ♗c6 6 f4 g6



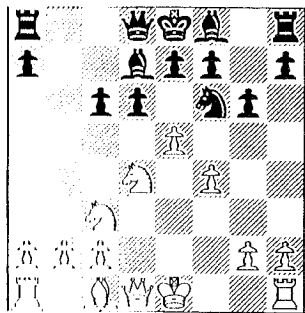
This started as a 'Classical Sicilian' but of course reaches the same position as 5...g6 6 f4 ♗c6.

7 ♖b5

As well as 7 ♘xc6 bxc6 8 e5, looked at shortly, White does have the option of attempting to transpose to another chapter by 7 ♖e2 or 7 ♘b3. Here the bishop pins the knight but should not really be that enthralled by the prospect of engaging in a trade. The immediate 7 ♘f3 is of independent significance and is looked at in the next game.

7...♗d7 8 ♘f3

When I was coaching the national Barbados team in the Istanbul Olympiad, for some reason the younger members were obsessed with the prospect of 8 ♖xc6 bxc6 (they hadn't actually considered recapturing this way but, of course, while 8...♗xc6 is also playable, it makes sense to preserve the bishop) 9 e5

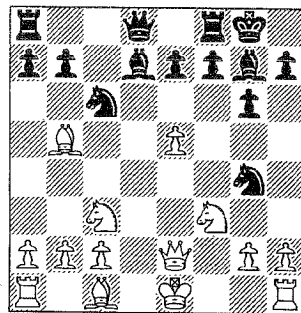


then and in fact it's been quite useful revising this old stuff. I guess I have you readers to thank for that!) 11...e6 12 ♖e2 ♗g7 13 c3 0-0 14 exd6 ♖b6 15 ♖e3 ♖xd6 left Black (who later won) with the centre pawns and the bishop-pair in P.Nikac-V.Inkirov, Nis 1994.

8...♗g7 9 ♖e2 0-0

Showing no fear of White's blatant intentions.

10 e5 dxe5 11 fxе5 ♘g4



Is the e5-pawn a thorn in Black's side or simply an isolated pawn in wolf's clothing?

12 ♖f4 a6 13 ♖c4 ♖e6!?

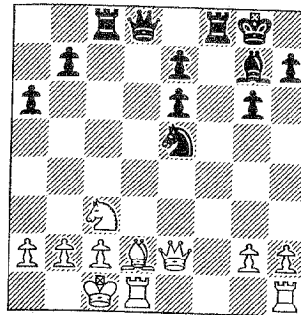
Although White probably had e6 in mind himself, this sort of move is not ordinarily the first that springs to mind. One outcome for Black is obviously doubled pawns. There is no disguising the fact that this is a downside but the silver lining in the cloud includes temporarily stopping the white king castling queenside. More importantly, opening the f-file, in order to attack the f4-bishop, in turn pressurizes the targeted e5-pawn.

14 ♖xe6 fxe6 15 ♖d2

Upon 15 ♖g3, 15...♗a5 looks the most active move to secure the e5-pawn. Plus, if White chooses to

castle short, a check on b6 is always on the cards.

15...♗xe5 16 ♘xc5 ♘xe5 17 0-0-0 ♖c8



Obviously Black would prefer to have his extra pawn on f7 instead, but, with all his active pieces, he cannot complain about his position.

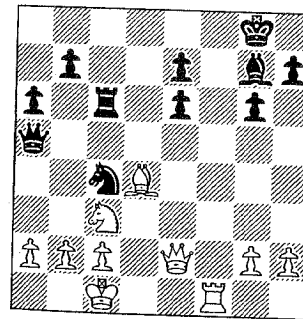
18 ♖e3 ♗a5

Simple chess. The queen is activated and, incidentally, White must guard against ...♖xc3.

19 ♖d4 ♖c6

A dual purpose move which protects the e6-pawn and offers up the chance to double rooks.

20 ♖hf1 ♖xf1 21 ♖xf1 ♘c4 0-1



And, unbelievably, the game is over with hardly any sweat at all. A

closer inspection reveals that ...♗b4 is a killer threat while 22 ♖xg7 falls foul of 22...♗g5+ 23 ♖b1 (or 23 ♖d1 ♘e3+) 23...♘d2+ 24 ♖a1 ♘xf1, winning the exchange.

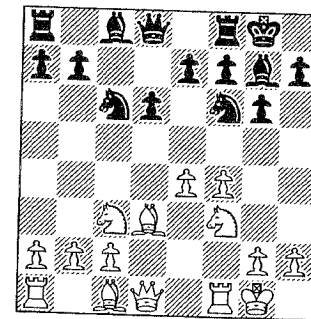
Game 2

P. Del Mundo White

R.Henley Black

US Open, Las Vegas 1997

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 f4 ♘c6!? 7 ♘f3 ♖g7 8 ♖d3 0-0 9 0-0

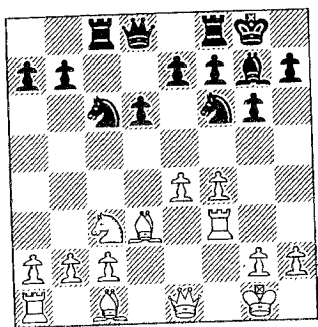


9...♖g4

Bearing in mind the queen check on b6, 9...b5 may or may not be possible. I would, however, recommend the text for its sheer simplicity. Rather than just getting in the way throughout the whole middle-game, the light-squared bishop prepares to exchange itself for the comparatively more useful knight. Though this will concede a bishop for a knight (a feature which could easily be regretted in the endgame), as it stands now, Black will have more space for his other pieces which will now all flow into the game with ease.

10 ♖e1 ♖xf3 11 ♖xf3 ♖c8

(This is the only justification for White's play but I still feel that, on sight, Black has a tendency to go overboard in the panicking stakes!) 9...♖d5 10 ♘xd5 cxd5 11 0-0 (I mentioned the 11 exd6 e6 12 f5 of Allen Ward, Maidstone 1991, in *WFTD*. I played 12...♗h4+ but could also have simply captured on d6. As it happens, I don't recall having a Levenfish encounter since



12 ♖h4

'Route 1' chess. However, while White plans his assault down the h-file, Black keeps on top of things elsewhere. Slightly more cautious would be 12 ♖h1 when, after 12...c6, played for the same reasons as in the main game, one instructive practical encounter saw: 13 ♗d2 (13 f5 ♗c5 14 ♖h3 ♗fg4 leaves Black in command of the better squares) 13...♗d7 14 ♗d1 ♗c5 15 ♗c1 d5 16 ♖h3 ♗xd3 17 cxd3 f5! 18 e5 ♖f7 19 d4 ♗f8 20 ♖g1 a6 21 g4 fxg4 22 ♖xg4 ♖d7 23 ♗e2 ♗e7 24 ♗g1 ♗f5 25 ♗f3 ♗e7 26 ♗g5 ♗xg5 (now Black has an excellent knight versus a dreadful bishop!) 27 fxg5 ♖a4 28 ♖a3 ♖c2 29 ♗ad3 ♖b1 0-1 as played in M.Roofdhooft -V.Tukmakov, Antwerp 1993.

12...c6

Clearly the slightly weak d-pawn is not going to be a problem as White has set his sights a long way from the d-file. The text *hedgehoggy* move eliminates ♗d5 from White's options and provides the black queen with a path to the kingside.

13 ♖h3 h5

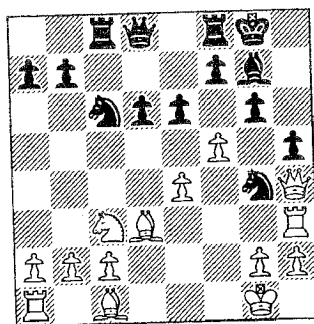
'Get past that!' is Black's laid down gauntlet. While also handily protecting the g4-square, Black knows that if he can rebuff the

enemy advance then White's offside pieces will just look silly.

14 f5

Attempting to crack the nut. White also lets his bishop in on the act but at the same time concedes the e5-square.

14...♗g4!

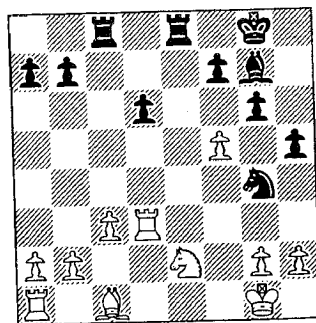


In view of the exposure along the b6-g1 diagonal, a queen swap is now forced, thereby leaving White to face the music on other neglected parts of the board.

15 ♖xd8 ♖fxd8 16 ♗e2 ♗b4

Black now puts the half-open c-file to good use, here threatening ...♗xc2.

17 c3 ♗xd3 18 ♖xd3 exf5 19 exf5 ♖e8



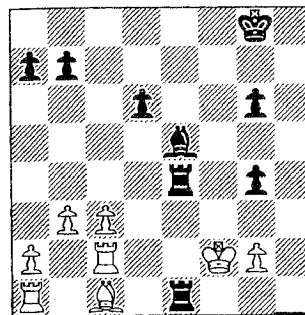
Black has saddled himself with an isolated d-pawn but the justification

comes with the difficulty that White now has with his knight.

20 h3 ♖xe2 21 hxg4 ♖e1+ 22 ♗f2 ♖ce8 23 ♗d2

The only way to guard the vulnerable second rank but to suggest that White's pieces are rather awkwardly placed would be something of an understatement!

23...hxg4 24 fxg6 fxg6 25 ♖c2 ♖8e4 26 b3 ♗e5



Setting up a mating net by 27...g3+ 28 ♖f3 ♖1e2 is threatened.

27 g3 ♖h1 28 ♖g2 ♖ee1 29 a4 ♖hg1+ 0-1

30...♗xg3 is mate next go!

Game 3

N.Illijin White
M.Cebalo Black
Casino Open 1999

1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 g6 6 f4 ♗c6!? 7 ♗xc6

The old continuation and the whole point of the variation, i.e. generally it's only good for White to trade knights on c6 if he can follow up with e4-e5. That said, it doesn't appear to be that great for White and so it looks as if it's a case of 'back to the drawing board!'.

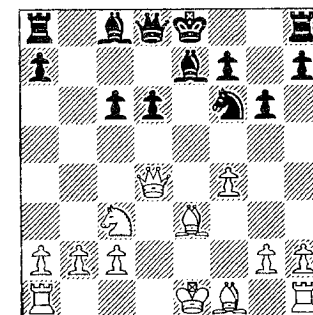
7...bxc6 8 e5 ♗d7

By the way, it's definitely worth avoiding 8...dxe5? (let's face it none of you would really have considered such an ugly move!!) 9 ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 10 fxe5 ♗g4 11 ♗f4 ♗g7 12 ♗d1+ ♗e8 13 ♗b5 which is crushing (and not for the good guys!).

9 exd6 exd6 10 ♖d4

Played immediately. White grabs the diagonal before Black's bishop does and at the same time prepares to castle long.

10...♗f6 11 ♗e3 ♗e7



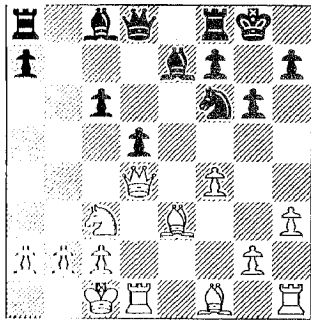
12 0-0-0

Possibly hoping to radically alter the course of theory, it's clear that this bold lesser-seen attempt backfires horribly. However, if instead 12 ♗e2 0-0 13 ♗f3 d5 14 ♖d2, avoiding the oncoming black pawn rush, then 14...♗g4! (14...♖e8 and 14...♖a5 are also most satisfactory) 15 0-0-0 ♖e8 16 h3 ♗xf3 17 gxf3 ♖d7! leaves White, though preventing ...♗g4 and ...♗e4, still blatantly in possession of a grim pawn structure.

12...0-0 13 h3

Regarding my previous remarks, clearly it is useful for White to deprive Black access to the g4-square. True, Black has more pawn islands (usually a bad thing), but the potential of his centre pawns and the half-open b-file are real bonuses.

13...d5

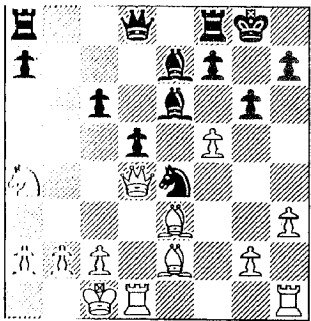


Black's pawn centre provides a nice springboard for an attack on the queenside. The d5-pawn is a rock which provides Black with a handy outpost on e4. As seems generally true in these lines, White would probably rather have his f-pawn back on f2 (rather making a mockery of the whole variation).

14 ♖a4

Intercepting, for the time being, any ...c5 and ...d4 plans, but this decentralising move makes concessions elsewhere.

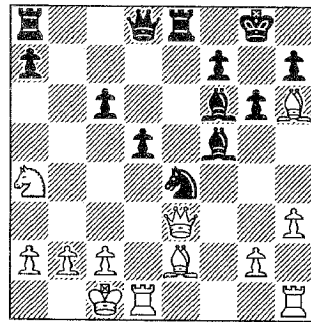
14...♞e4! 15 ♙e2 ♙e6 16 f5



This pawn was getting in the way and so White jettisons it in order to allow his dark-squared bishop to enter the fray. Alas, this proves to be

no skin off Black's back. Essentially, Black held all the cards with the likes of ...♞a5, ...♞b8 and ...♙f6, all available to improve his position. Moreover, ...c5 was once again a threat. With all this in mind, White takes desperate measures to generate counterplay. However he is not successful!

16...♙xf5 17 ♙h6 ♙f6 18 ♚e3 ♞e8



The black pieces are well coordinated while the white queen is being kicked from pillar to post.

19 ♚f4 ♚a5

Black's pieces are poised to strike—and strike they do!

20 b3 ♞c3

Black has hardly made any amazing moves and yet already he is on the brink of victory. For example, now 21 ♞xc3 ♚xc3 leaves mate threatened all over the place.

21 ♙d3 ♞xa2+ 22 ♚b1 ♞c3+

It's painful to watch. Now 23 ♞xc3 ♙xc3 would leave an unstoppable mate on a1. Black is quite simply toying with his opponent.

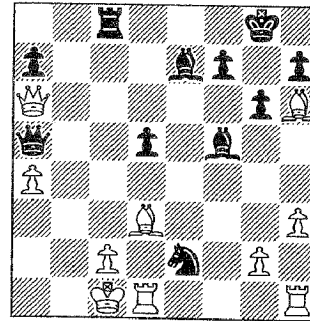
23 ♚c1 ♞e4

A nice touch. The rook is out of bounds because of the knight fork on e2. That said, of course, pretty much anything would win!

24 ♚d6 ♙e7 25 ♚xc6 ♞c8

Now all of the black pieces are in on the act.

26 ♚a6 ♞xa4 27 bxa4 ♞e2+ 0-1



It is mate in three against any defence! e.g. 28 ♚b2 ♚b4+ 29 ♚a2 ♞c3+ 30 ♚a1 ♚a3 mate.

As I grew up believing Tony Miles to be the archetypal Dragon player (no longer I'm afraid) and John Nunn being the notorious 'Beating the Sicilian' expert (sadly too often seen these days wooing it out with 2 c3), I couldn't resist retaining from *WSTD* this epic clash between these two famous English adversaries.

Game 4

J.Nunn White

A.Miles Black

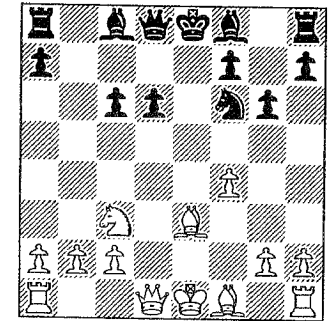
Phillips & Drew, London 1982

1 e4 e5 2 ♞f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♞xd4 ♞f6 5 ♞c3 g6 6 f4 ♞c6!? 7 ♞xc6 bxc6 8 e5 ♞d7 9 exd6 exd6 10 ♙e3

Arguably more flexible than the previously seen 10 ♚d4.

10...♞f6!?

If Black wants to complete the fianchetto he must not forget his d6-pawn.



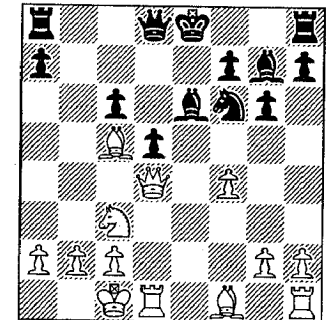
11 ♚d2

An alternative way for White to play is by 11 ♙e2 ♙g7 12 0-0 0-0 13 ♙f3. However, after 13...d5 14 ♙c5 (watch for the neat trick 14 ♞h1 ♞e8 15 ♙d4 ♙f5 16 g4?! ♙xg4! 17 ♙xg4 ♞xg4 18 ♙xg7 ♚h4, securing a free pawn.) 14...♞e8 15 ♞e1 ♙e6 16 ♞e2 ♚a5 17 ♙d4 ♞ad8 18 ♙c3 ♚b6+ 19 ♞d4 ♙f5 20 ♚d2, the advantage of having the centre pawn was illustrated well with 20...♞e4! 21 ♙xe4 dxe4 22 ♞ad1 ♙g4 23 ♞h1 ♙xd1 24 ♞xd1 e3 0-1 as in R.Setien-R.Alvarez, Villa Ballester 1993.

11...♙g7 12 0-0-0 d5 13 ♙c5

Frankly, I believe that this trapping of the black king in the centre is all that White has to go on. However, Black has cover in the middle and can generate enough action for the time being without the use of his king's rook.

13...♙e6 14 ♚d4



Offering support to the bishop and possibly also help on the queenside. Nevertheless the queen is potentially in the firing line.

14... ♖a5

The by no means ridiculous 14... ♖p8 15 ♖a4 ♖c7 16 ♖d3 ♖d7 17 ♖a3 ♖b6 18 ♖b4 ♖f8 19 ♖d4 ♖xa3 also worked out well for Black in M.Harkins-J.Shaw, Paisley 1995.

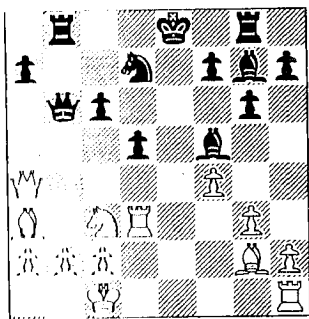
15 ♖b4 ♖c7

Of course, 14... ♖c7 would also have threatened to win the f4-pawn with ... ♖h5, as it does now.

16 g3 ♖b8 17 ♖a3 ♖g8

Still unable to castle, Black finds a use for his rook. Now the f6 knight is free to move wherever it wants to deliver a discovered attack on the nervous white queen.

18 ♖a4 ♖b6 19 ♖g2 ♖d7 20 ♖d3 ♖f5!



Sure, there is a slightly annoying check but the main focus of attention remains the white king.

21 ♖e1 ♖d8 22 ♖f3

The attempt to exploit the black king position with 22 ♖xd5 simply doesn't work, e.g. 22... ♖xb2+ 23 ♖b1 ♖xd5 24 ♖b3 ♖xa3 25 ♖xb6 ♖xb6+ 26 ♖a1 ♖b2+ 27 ♖b1 ♖c3! 28 ♖c1 ♖xe1 when, in contrast to his opponent, White hardly has any pieces left!

22... ♖e8 23 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 24 ♖d1 ♖c5 25 ♖e3+ ♖d8 26 ♖xc5

White really didn't want to have to concede this bishop but there was no retreat available to the white queen.

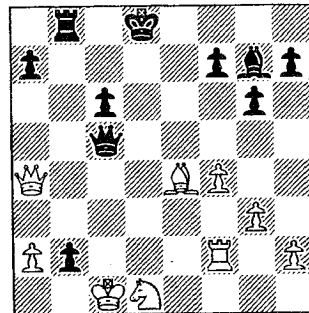
26... ♖xc5 27 c3 d4

Having the diagonals towards the white king covered, Black now cruelly gets cracking on the files.

28 ♖f3 ♖e4 29 ♖f2 dxc3! 30 ♖xe4

30 b3 ♖b4, with ...c2 to follow, is also pretty hopeless.

30... ♖xb2+



31 ♖d2

Of course the otherwise more desirable 31 ♖b1 allows 31... ♖c1 mate!

31... ♖b1=♖

31... ♖b4! would have terminated the proceedings a lot quicker but, knowing the rivalry between these two guys, that was probably the last thing Black wanted!

32 ♖xb1 ♖xb1 33 ♖f3 ♖b4 34 ♖d3+ ♖c7 35 ♖a3 a5 36 ♖c3 ♖f8 37 ♖c1 ♖f2+ 38 ♖d1 ♖g1+ 39 ♖e2

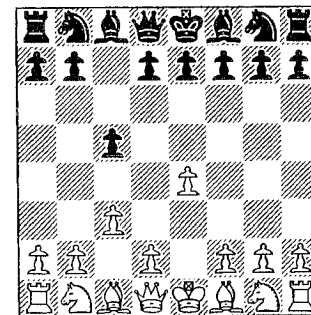
Black has had plenty of ways to kill off his opponent. This apparent blunder merely provokes White to end the punishment!

39... ♖xc1 0-1

12 Tips in the Anti-Sicilians

Well, we've had a lot of fun so far, but I'm afraid I must now turn your attention to somewhat more mundane matters. Yes, you might find it difficult to believe, but there are plenty of White kill-joys out there who aren't going to let you play your favourite opening. It's the real world and it's where you must be at your coolest! If you let on for just one second that you are disappointed that your opponent has avoided the 'Open Sicilian' then soon enough they'll all be doing it! Instead it's better to get on with things and simply convey an attitude of 'Well I didn't expect anything different from a wimp like you'! It is important that you are ultra-determined and, provided you win, your opponent will then realise what a futile exercise it was being ground down in some miserable system where fun and excitement was virtually non-existent for him.

If you haven't experienced it already, then the sad fact is that you will be getting a lot of practice in the Anti-Sicilians. I want you to be prepared for this whole different ball game and so let me begin by taking a look at the mother of them all: the variation known as the Alapin-Sveshnikov.



Sicilian 2 c3

With his second move, White signals his intention to obtain a big pawn centre by d2-d4. Yes, after a trade, he is preparing to recapture with the pawn rather than the knight, which is what typically characterizes the position as an Open Sicilian.

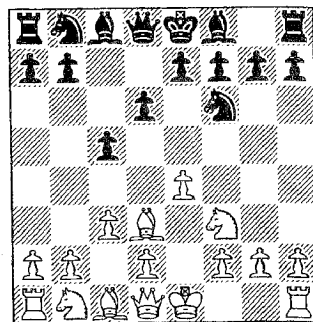
It is vital that Black now recalibrates his thinking. To continue with Dragon autopilot moves such as ... ♖c6, ...g6 and ... ♖g7 is not what is required. Indeed, White would then enter the middlegame with a comfortable space advantage and with Black having none of the benefits that we have seen throughout this book. After a trade of c-pawns White would be more likely to control the c-file than Black and the e5-square wouldn't be available to Black until White decided to squash Black further with d4-d5. To

summarize, after a couple of careful White moves to safeguard his centre. Black's pieces would most likely end up being suffocated. So Black needs to take more decisive action

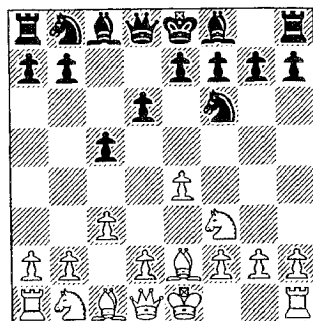
From the diagram, my advice for Black is to take advantage of the fact that White has at least in the short term deprived himself of the e3 square. The aim of this chapter is not for me to tell you exactly what to play against each White system, although here I would definitely recommend challenging the e4 pawn immediately. Some favour ...f6 since, with 3 d3 unavailable and moves such as 3 e3 ridiculous (Black should then aim for a quick ...d5), White is prompted into 3 e5. Certainly a potential thorn of a pawn (which will be supported by d2-d4), but at least enabling Black to make a home in the centre for his knight on d5.

Alternatively, very logical is ...d5. Black would obtain a very good French Defence-style position after 3 e5! as he could develop his light-squared bishop, say on f5, before continuing with ...e6 and ...c5. So 3 cxd5 is normal when the Black queen can take up a position in the centre without fear of being hit by an enemy piece. After 3...Wxd5 4 d4, one highly regarded line goes 4...f6 5 f3 g4 6 e2 e6. Nothing like the Dragon and, although playable alternatives include 4...g6, I must stress the need for you to be flexible. You are a Dragon player now which means thinking in a different way from someone who lists the Kings Indian, Pirc, King's Indian Attack and Reti in their opening repertoire. There is nothing quite like operating the Dragon bishop in a Yugoslav Attack, but

that does not mean that you can't live without a fianchettoed bishop!



Kopec System



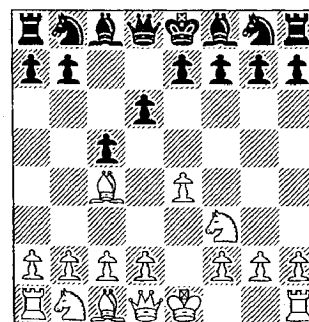
Basman System

With 2 f3 d6 3 c3, of course the loss of tempo 3...d5 can't be justified but, on the other hand, after 3...f6, the advance 4 e5 is no longer a testing option. In the Kopec System I have had some fun with 4...c6 5 h3 (you will soon see why this and 4 e3 are interchangeable) and then 5...d5!?. Sure, there is nothing particularly wrong with playing in a Pirc/King's Indian fashion with the likes of ...g6, ...g7, ...0-0 and an ...e5 lunge, but the text (trading the ...d7-d6-d5 tempo-loss for the comparatively irrelevant h3) encourages fun a million miles from

the Dragon, e.g. 6 e5 d7 7 e6!? fxe6 8 d5 f6 9 exh7 dxh7 10 Wh5+ xd7 11 dxh7. Black has definite compensation after 11...b6 12 f6+ exf6 13 Wxh8 a6.

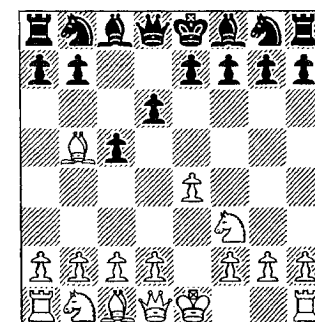
The amusing paradox that you may have observed is that, after 3...f6, Black isn't actually threatening to capture on e4 because of Wa4+. However, White must be careful to not just blunder his e-pawn as it is *en prise* after a d2-d4 push. As Black, in the 'Basman' system, beware of the trick 4...c6 5 d4 dxex4? 6 d5 winning a piece. Instead 5...cxd4 6 cxd4 dxex4 7 d5 Wa5+ is not so clear but there are safer 4th move alternatives. A solid set-up is 4...g6 5 0-0 g7 6 e1 0-0 7 f1 g4 as, after trading the g4-bishop for the knight, Black can often prevent White from forcing his centre with the likes of ...c6, ...d7 and attack on the queenside with ...b8 and ...b5-b4. Should White get in d2-d4, then ...Wb6 is another pressurising possibility. Trendy these days, though, is the line 6 e5+ with White evidently happy moving this bishop twice in order to get in d2-d4.

It is worth noting that 4...d7 is a sneaky way to threaten ...dxex4 whilst 4...g4 is also worth considering.



3 e4

This is a variation that had a surge of popularity even though it always struck me as the way beginners might handle a Sicilian, when coming across it for the first time! However, rather than just going for a quick d5, even strong players have adopted this slow, almost Ruy Lopez-like system, in which White slowly builds up for a d4 push. Nevertheless a game which sticks in my mind is M.Adams-A.Khalifman, Skolernes Skakklub Aarhus, which continued with 3...f6 4 d3 c6 5 dbd2 g6 6 a3 g7 7 0-0 0-0 8 a2 b5 9 e1 b8 10 c3 a5 11 d4 cxd4 12 cxd4 Wb6 13 f1 g4 14 e3 exf3 15 gxf3 Wb7 16 d3 a4 17 f4 a5 18 d2 c4 19 exc4 bxc4 20 e4 h5 21 d5 h4 22 f1 h5 23 Wg4 Wc8 24 f5 exb2 25 Wxh4 e6 26 Wg4 exa1 27 exa1 f6 28 Wg2 c3 29 de3 g8 30 e1 exb4 31 axb4 a3 32 gh1 a2 33 f4 Wa6 34 a1 Wd3 35 f6 f6 36 Wh3+ dh5 0-1. Though far from the only reply, clearly a fianchettoed response is more than satisfactory.

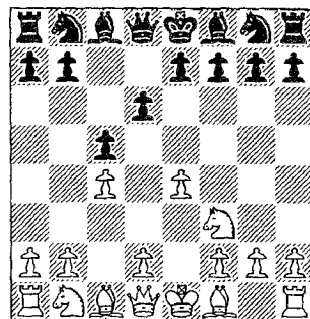


3 e5+ Sicilian

Possibly the 2nd most popular Anti-Sicilian is what many call the 'Rossolimo Variation' (but whether or not that is justified, 3 e5+ is less of a mouthful!). No, it's not

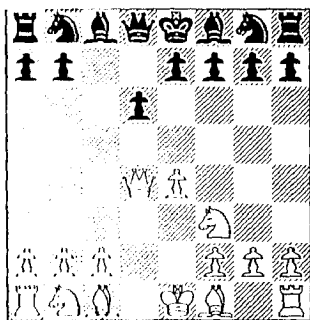
mate and 3...♖d7 isn't forced, but rather White's 3rd move check is based on quick development. Castling is usually next on White's agenda and, however Black blocks, a plan of e3 and d4 is typical. Yes, 3...♗d7, 3...♗c6 and 3...♗d7 are all playable, although as regards the latter, after a trade of bishops, another plan is popular. One standard continuation is 4 ♗xd7+ ♖xd7 5 0 0 ♗c6 (probably more accurate than 5...♗f6 6 e5!?) 6 c3 ♗f6 7 ♖e1 e6 (again, with a strong white pawn centre imminent, I would warn against any policy of ...g6) 8 d4 exd4 9 exd4 d5, but also common is 6 e4. With an intended follow up of d4, White looks to set up a Maroczy Bind. Black must of course insert ...exd4 when the inevitable occurs and then Black can once again turn to a kingside fianchetto, later looking to break the shackles of the bind with a ...d5 or ...b5 break.

pin buys the queen more time and again White will have the option of establishing the bind with c2-c4 before developing the other knight. Indeed, this is also common if Black employs the little subtlety 4...a6. I myself have then had 5 c4 ♗c6 6 ♖d3 g6 7 ♗c3 ♗g7 8 ♗e3 ♗f6 a few times.



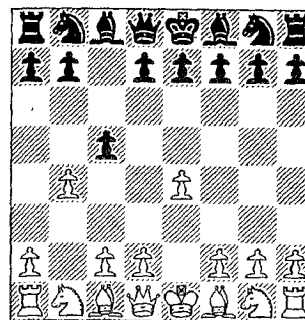
Sicilian 3 c4

Above is an uncommon attempt to railroad you into an Accelerated Dragon. However, with the usual Dragon move order, one can't be conned into allowing a Maroczy Bind and this is no different. Rather than falling into White's plans with 3...♗c6(!?) 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♗xd4 g6 etc., you should throw a big spanner in White's works. Although it looks a little dull, in fact 3...e5 is logical. Although the position appears to assume an air of symmetry, in fact, by having not yet played ...♗f6, in contrast to White, the opportunity will be there to try and trade off the 'bad' bishop with a future ...g6 and ...♗h6. Alternatively, a key move (e.g. right here, right now!) is ...♗g4. In exchanging the bishop for the knight, the chance of maintaining d4 as a permanent outpost will be much higher.

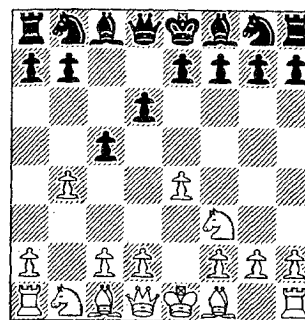


♖xd4 Sicilian

The most teasing of all the Anti-Sicilians as White can even hold a black pawn in his hand before disclosing his intention to capture in the centre with the queen instead of the knight. The point behind this idea is that White intends to meet the natural 4...♗c6 with 5 ♗b5. The



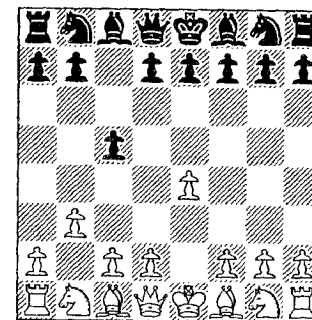
The Wing Gambit



The Wing Gambit Deferred

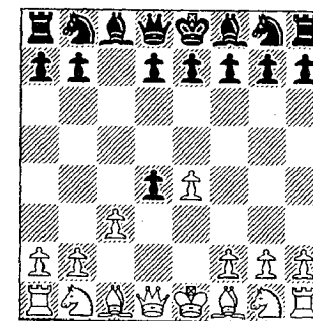
In the Wing Gambit, White attempts to establish two pawns in the centre by first luring away Black's c5-pawn. Openings like this are always dubious and who can forget (well assuming you'd seen it in the first place!) the alleged Grandmaster miniature: 2...cxb4 3 a3 d5! 4 exd5 ♖xd5 5 axb4?? ♖e5+.

In order to sidestep that, the deferred version is more logical but defending the e4-pawn (when ...♗f6 comes) is still awkward since White is deprived of the c3-square for his knight.



Sicilian 2 b3

If White is genuinely after a fianchetto for his queenside bishop then he can try 2 b3, but this is extremely rare. Although in the 2 ♗f3 e6 Sicilian line, 3 b3 is frequently tried, when Black can play ...e5 in one go it loses much of its appeal. Indeed, if Black shuts out the bishop on b2 with ...e5 and ...d6, even after a kingside fianchetto of his own he has a tempting plan revolving around the pawn break ...f5.

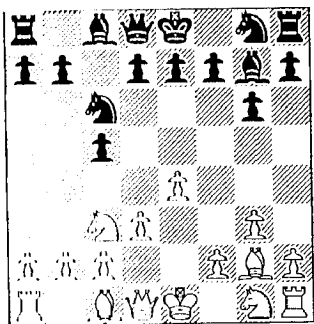


The Morra Gambit

Also known as the Smith-Morra, this gambit does have its moments. If accepted, White goes for quick development with the likes of ♗f3,

♖c4, ♗c2 and ♞d1, and Black must be tactically aware of what is going on. At the end of the day I suspect it is a case of 'a pawn is a pawn' although many a disaster has befallen Black players.

Usually there are ways of declining gambits and this is no exception. Black can safely fianchetto his king's bishop after returning the pawn with ...d3 (i.e. neither allowing White the quick ♜xc3 development nor the big cxd4 pawn centre). Perhaps more attractive, though, is 3...♗f6, if this was the system Black had selected against the 2 c3 Sicilian, as 4 c5 ♞d5 is a direct transposition. Strictly speaking, I suppose it could be argued that this is not taking advantage of an inferior opening but it would certainly frustrate the White player who has done a great deal of home preparation on his favourite gambit!



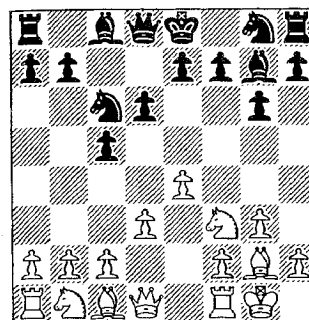
The Closed Sicilian

Strictly speaking, I suppose anything not an 'Open Sicilian' is by definition a 'Closed Sicilian'. However, the above diagram represents more what most typically understand by this title. In the short term at least, White eschews the concept of playing d4 and carries out a kingside fianchetto instead. Standard for

White is to continue with f4, ♜f3, 0-0 and ♗e3, although a modern approach is to play the last move at once, combining it with ♗d2 and a quick (if possible) ♗h6. I suppose many Sicilian players (e.g. exponents of the Najdorf, Taimanov or Classical variations) might be uncomfortable with developing their bishop on g7 but, of course, as a Dragon player this should be right down your street. Yes, the dark-squared bishop finds itself with a nice open diagonal where it exerts some handy pressure both in the centre and on White's queenside. The only real question is where should the g8-knight go? I was brought up on the rule that in 'closed' style positions, without the half-open c- and d-files, the knight is misplaced on f6 as there it faces a frontal attack from a white pawn advance (e.g. f4, h3, g4 etc.). Instead the books preached that it is more comfortably placed on e7 where it offers some protection against an f4-f5 push (usefully supporting an ...f5 blocker, particularly after White has played g4) and can easily control the key d4 square by following its colleague to c6. Indeed, although occasionally the knight is kept at home until after Black has carried out a swift ...♞b8 and ...b5-b4, more often the principal decision for Black is whether it is ...e6 or ...e5 that should be played to pave the way for ...♞g7.

As a word of warning, although it appears that White is ruling out the pawn push d2-d4, Black must be very wary of White back-tracking after he has played ...e6. Taking our illustrative position, for example, after 5...e6 6 ♞g2 ♞g7 7 ♗e3 d6, the move 8 d4 could ultimately pinpoint Black's d6-pawn as a target.

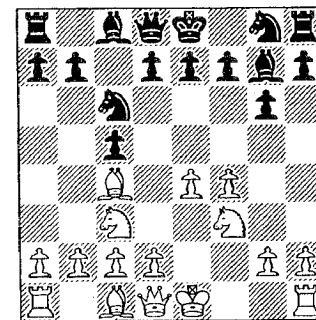
The key move ...♞d4 should be inserted whenever d3-d4 is threatened, as it is generally unacceptable for White to capture this piece with the knight or the bishop (instead he must aim to kick it with c2-c3). That said, there are occasionally tactical tricks, e.g. 5...e6 6 f4 d6 7 ♞f3 ♞g7 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♗e3 ♞b8 (of course 9...♞d4 is sensible) 10 d4 cxd4 11 ♞xd4 ♗b6! with tactics in the centre not dissimilar to those seen in our Classical Dragon chapter, i.e. 12 ♞a4 ♗xd4 13 ♞xb6 ♗xe3+ 14 ♖h1 ♗xb6 15 ♗xd6 e5 with three active pieces for the queen.



The King's Indian Attack

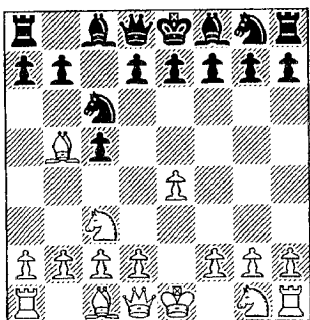
Even quieter than the just seen Closed Sicilian, White's build-up can be tediously slow in the King's Indian Attack. Although Black still has ...e6 at his disposal, it is generally considered that the KIA is less effective against 2...d6 than 2...e6 Sicilians. Indeed after, say, 6...e5 with ...♞g7, it can justifiably be claimed that Black can make the obvious ...f5 break before White's corresponding f4, as he hasn't obstructed his f-pawn. Although, as I've said, I was always taught that

...♞f6 is inaccurate in such positions, in fact I have seen Kasparov play this move and then succeed with a plan of rapid queenside expansion.



The Grand Prix Attack

As regards move-orders, the above system is a good illustration of how Dragon players benefit from not having to be quite so exact in their first few moves. In the popular Sicilian Najdorf, Black usually develops the queen's knight on d7 rather than c6. Hence, after 1 e4 c5 2 ♞c3, they may be more reticent about 2...♞c6 in case the game is channelled back into an Open Sicilian by 3 ♞f3 (or e2) and 4 d4. Although ...d6 is hardly a bad move, there is a better way of foiling White's aspirations of d3, 0-0 and f5 (and standard attacking ideas of ♗e1-h4 etc.). Specifically, it is natural for Black to continue with 5...e6, not only to develop the king's knight on the flexible e7-square but also to block out White's bishop on the c4-f7 diagonal. Furthermore, the ...d5 break is going to be extremely tempting—and this is all the sweeter if the pawn comes from d7 rather than d6 (i.e. saving a whole tempo).



1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5

I have written out the moves in full because I really don't know if this fairly modern system has a name or not. In my view, the difference between this and a corresponding position with the g-knight on f3 and the c3-knight at home is that I believe 4 ♗xc6 now to be a serious positional threat. The basis for my argument is that with f2-f4 imminent, Black will be unable to insert the move ...e5 that ordinarily gains an important foothold in the centre. I would therefore probably suggest 3...♗d4, although 3...♗a5 may appeal to the more creative reader!

A sneaky trap to watch out for is 3...♗d4 4 ♗c4 e6 5 ♗f3 ♗f6 6 0-0

d5? 7 exd5 exd5 8 ♗xd5! ♗xd5 9 ♗xd4 cxd4 10 ♖h5 ♗e6 11 ♗e1 or, along the same lines, 6...a6 7 d3 d5? 8 exd5 exd5 9 ♗xd5! ♗xd5 10 ♗xd4 cxd4 11 ♖h5 ♗e6 12 ♗e1. Rather clever (and dangerous!) and with ...d5 logical, it has all come rather out of the blue. However, in the latter case, for example, it is satisfactorily avoided by 7...b5 8 ♗b3 ♗xb3 9 axb3 ♗b7.

Naturally there are alternatives. A Dragon player may be tempted to fianchetto his favourite bishop. Though leaving White's light-squared bishop biting on granite with 4...e6 is sensible, 4...g6 is also certainly playable.

Hardly a complete guide to beating the Anti-Sicilians but there are dedicated monographs covering these lines, anyway. However, if you weren't familiar with what non-main line White players might throw at you before, hopefully you will be now! Don't leave it at that, though. Get yourself more booked up on these offbeat lines and then, once comfortably prepared, you can simply concentrate on winning with Dragon!

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